



GEOFFREY RUSH JAI COURTNEY

Storm boy

LET YOUR HEART SOAR

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A STUDY GUIDE BY
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Director:
Shawn Seet.
Length:
98 mins

A beautiful and contemporary re-telling of Colin Thiele's classic Australian tale.

'Storm Boy' has grown up to be Michael Kingley, a successful retired businessman and grandfather. When Kingley starts to see images from his past that he can't explain, he is forced to remember his long-forgotten childhood, growing up on an isolated coastline with his father. He recounts to his grand-daughter the story of how, as a boy, he rescued and raised an extraordinary orphaned pelican, Mr Percival. Their remarkable adventures and very special bond has a profound effect on all their lives. Based on the beloved book, *Storm Boy* is a timeless story of an unusual and unconditional friendship.

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Curriculum links

Storm Boy is recommended viewing for primary and secondary students in Years 3–9. The film is relevant to units of work in the learning areas of English, Geography and Media Arts.

ENGLISH

The Australian Curriculum: English is built around the three interrelated strands of Language, Literature and Literacy. Together the strands focus on developing students' knowledge, understanding and skills in listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating. In English, students engage with a variety of texts for enjoyment. They read and view, and also interpret and evaluate texts of personal, cultural, social and aesthetic value. Through engagement with texts, students learn about themselves, each other and the world.

The activities within this study guide provide opportunities for students to:

- engage critically and imaginatively with a text to expand the scope of their experience;
- analyse the structure of a text and how the features of a text influence audience response;
- analyse the key ideas and issues explored in a text;
- consider how language can be used for aesthetic ends;
- develop and justify their own and other interpretations of a text;
- create a wide range of texts, make presentations and contribute actively to class and group discussions.

Recommended link: <<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/english/>>

MEDIA ARTS

The Australian Curriculum: Media Arts engages students in critical discussion of film and television works. They analyse, interpret, and evaluate the stylistic, technical, expressive and aesthetic features of these works and the ways that the works communicate and challenge ideas and meaning. As a classroom resource, *Storm Boy* is relevant to the teaching of how a film engages audiences, draws on codes and conventions, and constructs representations.

The activities within this study guide provide opportunities for students to:

- understand the aesthetic, style and format of a film;
- use critical approaches to analyse and interpret a film;
- analyse the use of elements of media arts (technical and symbolic)
- analyse the use of story principles of structure, intent, characters, settings, points of view and genre conventions;
- understand how audiences participate in the construction of the meaning of a film and explain ways in which a film reinforces or challenges social, cultural and artistic values;
- use appropriate media terminology and personal interpretations to describe the structure, content and aesthetic qualities of a film.

Recommended link: <<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/the-arts/media-arts/>>

GEOGRAPHY

The Australian Curriculum: Geography empowers students to shape change for a socially just and sustainable future. Through a structured way of exploring, analysing and understanding the characteristics of the places that make up our world, Geography enables students to question why the world is the way it is, and reflect on their relationships with and responsibilities for that world.

The activities within this study guide provide opportunities for students to:

- describe and explain geographical processes that influence the characteristics of places and how the places are perceived and valued differently;
- explain interconnections between people and places and environments and describe how these interconnections change places and environments.

Recommended link: <<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/humanities-and-social-sciences/geography/>>

Storm Boy provides an opportunity for teachers to develop cross-curriculum units in these learning areas.

In addition, *Storm Boy* is a relevant resource to address the cross-curriculum priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures and Sustainability. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures priority provides opportunities for students to deepen their knowledge of Australia by engaging with the world's oldest continuous living cultures. Through the Australian Curriculum, students will understand that contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are strong, resilient, rich and diverse. The Sustainability priority students develop the knowledge, skills, values and world views necessary to contribute to more sustainable patterns of living.

Recommended links:

<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/cross-curriculum-priorities/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-histories-and-cultures/>
<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/cross-curriculum-priorities/sustainability/>

Teachers are advised to consult the Australian Curriculum online at <<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/>> and curriculum outlines relevant to their state or territory.

Teachers should direct students to complete tasks that are subject-relevant and age-appropriate. The vocabulary used to express some questions and activities will need to be adapted to suit primary classes.

Synopsis

Michael Kingley (Geoffrey Rush), a world-weary retired businessman, travels to Adelaide to vote as a director of the company he founded on the leasing of farming land in the Pilbara region to a mining company.

His son-in-law, Malcolm Downer (Erik Thomson), is confident the board will approve the lease without a hitch as they are all, it would seem, on the same page. However, Michael starts to see things he at first can't explain, and the vote is delayed a day when a storm unleashes its fury, wrecking the company's boardroom.

Malcolm travels to Sydney on urgent overnight business, leaving Michael to join his sixteen-year-old granddaughter Maddy (Morgana Davies) and spend time with her at the Downer family home.

Maddy is angered by the company's pending decision and its environmental impact. She directs her fury towards her father who supports the lease. To help repair Maddy's relationship with her father, Michael tells his granddaughter the story of his childhood, when as Storm Boy (Finn Little), he lived a lonely existence with his father Hideaway Tom (Jai Courtney) in a small shack between Ninety Mile Beach and the Coorong in South Australia. Tom retreated to the coast after experiencing personal tragedy. He wanted to protect his son from a harsh and unforgiving world.

The Coorong has a bird breeding ground and a hunting area and one day, after befriending an Aboriginal man, Fingerbone Bill (Trevor Jamieson), Storm Boy rescues three pelican chicks whose mother has been killed by hunters. Storm Boy fiercely dedicates himself to rearing the weak and vulnerable animals, naming them Mr Proud, Mr Ponder and Mr Percival.

The pelicans grow and Storm Boy reluctantly returns them to their breeding ground, so they can live in the wild, amongst their own kind. However, Mr Percival soon returns and the extraordinary bond between the two changes Michael's life forever.

A pending vote to turn the hunting ground into a bird sanctuary brings danger into their secluded world and when sudden tragedy strikes again, Storm Boy is pushed into the outside world.

As Michael tells his story to Maddy, the reconnection with his past, as Storm Boy, brings him back to life and he makes a decision that will impact not just his future and that of his family, but the future of the precious world around him.

Characters

Teachers may choose to give students the following descriptions of characters or ask students to write their own character descriptions. An imaginative approach to character profiles requires students to make a deck of character playing cards. These cards can then be used in activities linked to the analysis of the film.

- * **MICHAEL 'STORM BOY' KINGLEY:** As a young boy growing up in the late 1950s, Michael Kingley lives in a beach shack on the Coorong with his father. He misses his mother and sister who both died in a car accident. Michael spends most of his time exploring the coastal wilderness that is his home and has a close connection with nature. His nickname is Storm Boy. Fingerbone Bill calls him Mantawu Ngauriri.
- * **MICHAEL KINGLEY:** Cut to present day and Michael Kingley is now a retired director of King Pastoral Holdings. His granddaughter Maddy's rebellion and his desire to mend the rift between Maddy and her father Malcolm prompts his renewed interest in the company.
- * **HIDEAWAY TOM:** Tom is a protective father who chooses to live with his son on a remote stretch of Ninety Mile Beach since the death of his wife and daughter. He makes a living as a fisherman. The Goolwa locals call him Hideaway Tom. Tom is a loving and protective father.
- * **FINGERBONE BILL:** Fingerbone Bill is a Ngarrindjeri man. He lives on a campsite on the Coorong. Like Tom, his life experiences have led to his decision to retreat from society. Fingerbone Bill is a friend to both Storm Boy and Tom. He teaches Storm Boy about the importance of land and the life that it supports.
- * **MADLINE DOWNER:** Sixteen-year-old Maddy is Michael's granddaughter. She is still grieving the loss of her mother Sonia. Maddy is angry about her father's decision to lease King Pastoral Holdings' land in the Pilbara to a mining company.
- * **MALCOLM DOWNER:** Michael's son-in-law Malcolm is the director of King Pastoral Holdings. Malcolm believes that leasing the Pilbara land to a mining company is in the company's best interest. He believes that Maddy's disapproval of his plans for the Pilbara land is typical teenage rebellion and chooses to ignore her opposition.
- * **MR PROUD, MR PONDER AND MR PERCIVAL:** Mr Proud, Mr Ponder and Mr Percival are the three Australian Pelicans that Storm Boy rescues and rears with the help of his father and Fingerbone Bill.

Setting

Setting refers to the time and place of the story.

Storm Boy is set in the present day and the late 1950s. The film's key place settings are:

- NINETY MILE BEACH
 - THE COORONG
 - GOOLWA
 - THE DOWNER FAMILY PROPERTY
 - THE KING PASTORAL HOLDINGS BOARDROOM
- Draw an A3 map of Michael 'Storm Boy' Kingley's world. Include annotations that identify the significance of the places shown on the map. Your map should have a border, title and a legend.

Key ideas

What can *Storm Boy* teach you about your life?

Working as a class, make a list of the ideas explored in *Storm Boy*. Alternatively, teachers may choose to provide students with a list of ideas, such as those provided below:

- ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
- FAMILY
- FRIENDSHIP
- ISOLATION
- LAND
- LOVE
- LOSS
- RESPECT

A suggested activity is to ask students to write the words that name a key idea in the middle of an A3 page. Students can use the space around the word(s) to write about the film's exploration of this idea. For example, students writing about respect could be encouraged to think about what comment *Storm Boy* makes about respecting nature, respecting people, respecting culture and respecting the past.

Pelicans

PELICANS ARE A LARGE WATER BIRD. THE PELICANS FEATURED IN *STORM BOY* ARE AUSTRALIAN PELICANS (PELECANUS CONSPICILLATUS). AUSTRALIAN PELICANS ARE WIDESPREAD ON THE INLAND AND COASTAL WATERS OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW GUINEA. THE NGARRINDJERI WORD FOR PELICAN IS 'NORI'. THE NORI IS A TOTEM OF THE NGARRINDJERI.

- Michael tells Maddy that without access to a veterinarian or a public library and because the Internet did not exist, he had no way of accessing information about pelicans. Use print and electronic resources to locate information about the Australian Pelican. Imagine if someone in town had lent *Storm Boy* an encyclopedia that included an entry about the Australian Pelican. Drawing on your research, write and illustrate this encyclopedia entry.

Storm Boy – a novella

Colin Thiele's novella *Storm Boy* was first published in 1964. Thiele was an author and school teacher. He wrote more than 100 books, many of which described life in rural Australia, particularly the Coorong region of coastal South Australia. *Storm Boy* is regarded as an Australian classic. Its popularity is confirmed by the fact that it has never been out of print since it was first published.

Storm Boy (1976)

Henri Safran's adaptation of Colin Thiele's novella was an Australian box office success and won Best Film at the 1977 AFI Awards. Greg Rowe starred as ten-year-old Michael 'Storm Boy' Kingley. Hideaway Tom was played by Peter Cummins and Fingerbone Bill was played by David Gulpillil. David Gulpillil appears as Fingerbone Bill's father in *Storm Boy* (2018).

The Coorong and Coorong National Park

South Australia's Coorong National Park was established in 1966. The park includes the lagoon ecosystem known as the Coorong and Younghusband Peninsula. The traditional owners of the Coorong are the Ngarrindjeri people. The Coorong is a sacred place to the Ngarrindjeri.

Recommended link:

https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/parks/find-a-park/Browse_by_region/Limestone_Coast/coorong-national-park/

- Use Google Earth to locate and explore the Coorong.
- Use online resources to research the Coorong. Organise your research using subheadings and record the URLs of the websites that you access. Suggested subheadings include: location, geographic characteristics, flora, fauna, history and current land use.
- Draw a map that shows the location of the Coorong. Identify Border, Orientation, Legend, Title, Scale, Source (BOLTSS). Below the map, write a description of the location, physical and human geographic characteristics of the Coorong and a description of current land use.
- Use a class display board to build a collage of the environment of the Coorong.
- What is a national park? Why are national parks important? What are the national parks in your state or territory? Have you visited any of the national parks in your state or territory? Why was the Coorong declared a national park?



First impressions

The first viewing of *Storm Boy* should be for enjoyment. After viewing, ask students to share their thoughts about the film with the class. Provide students with the opportunity to ask questions about the film. Possible discussion prompts include:

- Did you enjoy *Storm Boy*? Why or why not?
- What was your favourite scene? Why?
- Who was your favourite character? Why? Which character(s) did you dislike? Why?
- What is the message of *Storm Boy*?

Viewing notes

For primary students: ask students to use their viewing notes to draw one A4-page comic that tells the story of *Storm Boy*.

For secondary students: ask students to use their viewing notes to construct an annotated timeline that tells the story of *Storm Boy*.



Key scenes

Make a list of key scenes. Write a dot-point description of what happens in each key scene.

Characters

Name the characters that appear in each key scene.

Settings

Identify the settings and write a brief description of the setting for each key scene.

Ideas

Use a word to identify the most important idea of each key scene.



Scene analysis task

- For primary students
Choose your favourite scene and then answer the following questions.

1. What did you see?
2. What did you hear?
3. What did you think?
4. What did you feel?

Use Google Slides or PowerPoint to present your answers to the questions.

- For secondary students
Make a detailed analysis of one of the film's key scenes. Use the following questions to make notes about the scene that you have selected.

1. What is the scene about?

2. Why is the scene significant?
3. How do the filmmakers use production elements in this scene to convey meaning?

Production elements refer to elements that you can see on the screen in a narrative. Production elements include:

CAMERA TECHNIQUES

ACTING

MISE EN SCENE

EDITING

LIGHTING

SOUND

Use Google Slides or PowerPoint to present your answers to the questions.

Characters

On **Table 2** overleaf use adjectives to describe each character's appearance and their personality. Include other facts about the character that you think are important.

Using an A3 piece of paper, map the characters' relationships with each other. Use words, images and symbols to annotate the map and to explain the characters' relationships. Make sure the design of the map is relevant to *Storm Boy*.

Character	
Storm Boy	
Michael Kingley	
Hideaway Tom	
Fingerbone Bill	
Madeline Downer	
Malcolm Downer	
Mr Proud, Mr Ponder and Mr Percival	
Mr and Mrs Johnson	
The hunters	
Cal and Julie	

Glossary

Did the characters use words that you had not heard before and do not know the meaning of? Make a list of these words. Use a dictionary to define the words that you have listed.



Word	Meaning



Close analysis

* 1. A STORM A-BREWING

Michael Kingley wakes with a start from a dream about his childhood. He is in a car and on his way to an important board meeting at King Pastoral Holdings. Sitting next to him in the back seat of the car is Michael's son-in-law Malcolm Downer. While Malcolm is glad that Michael has been able to make the time to be present for the meeting, Michael's thoughts are more of his now deceased daughter and the importance of marking her birthday with family.

A protagonist is the main character of a narrative. The events of the plot revolve around the protagonist. The audience is meant to identify with the protagonist. Michael Kingley is the protagonist of *Storm Boy*.

- How do the opening shots of the film establish the setting of the Coorong?
- How do the opening shots of the film introduce the character of the younger Michael? What does the older Michael see and hear in his dream?
- Why do you think the director decided to use aerial shots in the opening scene?

Storm Boy makes extensive use of flashback. A flashback in a film is a scene that takes the story back in time. As you watch *Storm Boy*, make notes about when, why and how the director Shawn Seet uses flashback. For example, the dream that Michael has of his childhood is a type of flashback. Through this flashback it becomes evident that the past is on Michael's mind.

- Explain the significance of Michael using the word 'walkabout' to refer to his overseas trip.

As the car approaches its destination, Michael's attention is drawn to the noise of a protest. He looks from the car to see what is happening. A crowd of protestors stand in the rain, holding placards and chanting. They are protesting about mining in the Pilbara. When Malcolm and Michael get out of the car, the media call their names wanting a statement about whether or not they will be voting yes to leasing their land holdings.

The impact of mining is one of the environmental issues explored in the film.

- Malcolm: 'The decision to lease the farmland for sustainable mining has the support of all local communities'. Describe Michael's view of the protest. Describe Malcolm's view of the protestors. Where is the Pilbara? What is sustainable mining? Who is Malcolm referring to when he uses the phrase 'local communities'?

Safe inside the foyer of the high-rise office building, Michael is distracted by the sight of an Aboriginal man wearing a red shirt standing outside in the rain. The man is Fingerbone Bill. He waves to Michael who is clearly confused by this vision from his past.

- Why do you think Michael imagines that he sees Fingerbone Bill?

As you watch *Storm Boy*, make notes about the director's use of the colour red to convey meaning.

Michael's phone rings. It is his granddaughter Maddy. She needs her grandfather's help. Michael is confused by Maddy's agitation.

- Maddy: 'Do you know what he's doing? If I was eighteen. If I was on the Board, I'd stop him. I'll send you a link'. What does Michael see when he clicks the link that Maddy has sent? What does this conversation tell the audience about Maddy's sense of justice? How does Maddy differ from the other schoolgirls who watch as a teacher confiscates her phone?

The meeting is about to begin. Michael is directed to a seat at the far end of the boardroom table. Michael is pleased to see old friends and fellow board members Cal and Julie (Paul Blackwell and Chantal Contouri). He surprises both of them with packets of Lolly Gobble Bliss Bombs that he purchased in Singapore. At the other end of the boardroom table, Malcolm and others are preoccupied with business.

- When Julie asks Michael, 'How's things?' he replies, 'I'd say there's a storm a-brewing.' What is the storm that Michael is referring to?
- Write a description of what is happening at each end of the boardroom table. What do you think the director wants us to think about the attitudes and behaviour of the people present at the board meeting?
- What are Lolly Gobble Bliss Bombs? What do the Lolly Gobble Bliss Bombs represent in this scene?

Without warning, the force of the storm outside causes the plate glass window of the boardroom to shatter inwards. While everyone else scrambles to retrieve documents and move to a position of safety, a mesmerised Michael walks towards the broken window and stands in front of it looking out at the wild weather, until Malcolm grabs him and leads him away.

- Explain the significance of the pelican that Michael sees when he looks out of the broken window.
- Malcolm: 'I'm afraid we're going to have to reconvene tomorrow for the vote. The room's a mess and I've got to fly to Sydney now.'
Michael: 'I thought we were planning to have dinner with Maddy?'
Malcolm: 'I can't. I have to romance the investors.'
Michael: 'So we can make a toast to Sonia.'
Malcolm: 'Well, I'm sorry but you know how it is. We'll all go out tomorrow.'
Michael: 'She sent me this.'
Malcolm: 'Oh, Jesus! Look, it's not an issue. The land's been deregistered. You saw. The elders were at the table with us.'
Michael: 'She was pretty angry.'
Malcolm: 'Well, you know, what it's like at that age. Thinking everything your father does is wrong or corrupt. It's nothing. I promise you. I'll see you tomorrow.'
Michael: 'Yes. Tomorrow, Malcolm. It's important.'
What is this conversation about? What does this conversation reveal about Michael and Malcolm's priorities? How does this conversation add to the audience's knowledge and understanding of Michael and Malcolm's relationship?

* 2. YOU'RE JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE

When Michael arrives at the Downer family home, he notices Maddy, on the beach at the back of the property, staring out to sea. For the second time that day he sees pelicans. When he looks again, the pelicans are gone.

In the scene that follows, Maddy is in her room reading an online article. Its headline is

'Pilbara Land Rape. Pastoral Outrage'. Maddy is annoyed when her grandfather interrupts her privacy. She tells him, 'You're supposed to knock. That's the deal. I don't lock and everyone knocks.' While Michael wants to know if Maddy saw the pelicans while she was on the beach, Maddy is only interested in whether he has read the article.

- Why is Maddy angry? What does Maddy expect her grandfather to do? Is Michael willing to help Maddy? What three words do you think best describe Maddy's teenage identity? Use direct and indirect evidence from *Storm Boy* to endorse your choices.

Michael seeks comfort in the past. He retrieves an old wooden sea chest and sorts through the contents. He finds an old edition of the novel *Lord of the Flies* with a pelican feather bookmark. Nestled in an old biscuit tin amongst photographs and other keepsakes is a locket. Inside the locket are black and white photographs of Michael's mother and his sister Belle (Lucy Cowan).

- Seet uses a flashback montage to depict the memories that are prompted by the locket. Make a list of what Michael remembers. Explain the significance of the memories.

Maddy, blanket draped around her shoulders, ventures into the living room to apologise to her grandfather. Michael hides the locket in his pocket. As they sit together on the couch, Michael admits to his sadness.

- Maddy: 'Grandpa, I'm sorry about shouting. I know none of this is really your fault but I just get so angry.'
Michael: 'I once believed in things just like you do, Maddy. Things that were special to me.'
Compare this scene between Maddy and Michael with the previous scene set in Maddy's bedroom. Drawing on these two scenes describe Maddy and Michael's relationship. Like Maddy, do you have a close relationship with a grandparent or an older member of your extended family? What role does this family member play in your life?



* 3. I CALL YOU MANTAWU NGAURIRI

Michael begins to tell Maddy the story of his childhood:

My home was a little shack perched on a long stretch of sandhills and scrub, just down south in the Coorong. We left the city. My dad wanted to be as far away from anyone as possible. We'd go for days and weeks without seeing another person. I spent my days on the sea and my nights doing homeschooling. And in the mornings, I watched the birds. The world might have seemed harsh to my dad and me but not to them. They were home. I didn't really know any other life. I was cut off from the world. Then one day the world came to me.

Seet uses flashback to link the present and the past.

- What does the scene that begins this flashback sequence tell the audience about Michael and Tom's relationship?
- Why do Tom and Storm Boy live on Ninety Mile Beach? Describe the shack where Tom and Storm Boy live. Make sure that you describe the exterior and the interior of the shack. What does the shack tell the audience about Tom and Storm Boy's lifestyle? Do you think the shack looks like home? Do you think Tom and Storm Boy are happy?

Tom sells the fish that he catches at Johnson's Seafood in Goolwa. He buys the supplies that he needs on these visits.

- Mrs Johnson: 'It's not right a boy living alone out there'. Do you think Mrs Johnson (Martha Lott) is right? Or, do you agree with Mr Johnson (Rory Walker), who tells his wife to leave things be?

A ute parked on the main street of Goolwa has a sticker on the rear window that reads 'Vote no to sanctuary'. Tom explains to Storm Boy that a sanctuary will make the

Coorong a safe place for the birds.

Whether or not the Coorong bird nesting area will continue to be designated as a hunting ground or transformed into a conservation sanctuary is one of the environmental issues explored in the film.

- Tom: 'I think the vote will be close. Knowing people, they'll probably side with the hunters. Who cares about a bunch of birds?'
Why do you think that Tom doubts that people will vote yes to the sanctuary?

Storm Boy is searching for shells when he encounters Fingerbone Bill. Fingerbone Bill tells an apprehensive Storm Boy that he has found a midden and then introduces himself. When Fingerbone Bill holds out his hand, Storm Boy does not return the gesture.

- Fingerbone Bill: 'Proper white man word is midden. They used to crack shellfish here. Good tucker.'
What is a midden? How does this interaction between Storm Boy and Fingerbone Bill foreshadow the role that Fingerbone Bill will play in Storm Boy's life?
- Fingerbone Bill: 'You know what I call you Mantawu Ngauriri because you walk in the big blow. I've seen you.'
Explain the significance of the name that Fingerbone Bill gives him. Can you make a link between the name that Fingerbone Bill gives Storm Boy and his behaviour when the boardroom window breaks?

When Storm Boy and Fingerbone Bill hear the gunshots of the hunters they run through the sandhills towards the noise. The ground is covered with dead birds, most of which have been killed as target practice. Fingerbone Bill tells Storm Boy, 'When a pelican is killed, there'll always be storm.'

Storm Boy finds a nest of baby pelicans. While Fingerbone Bill believes that there is nothing that they can do, Storm Boy is unwilling to let the pelican chicks die. He gently wraps the three chicks in his cardigan and carries them home.

- If you had found the nest of pelican chicks, what would you have done? Were you surprised that Fingerbone Bill advised Storm Boy to leave the pelican chicks to fend for themselves?



* 4. SO, TELL ME MORE ABOUT THE BIRDS

The following morning, Michael is asleep on the couch. Angela (Caroline Mignone) has made coffee. She suggests Maddy get moving to avoid being late for school. Maddy has the first two periods free and is keen to stay at home with her grandfather. Michael's story continues.

- How does the scene that begins this flashback sequence depict Storm Boy's determination to keep the pelican chicks alive?

When Tom arrives home, he is curious about the smell. Storm Boy leads his father towards the fireplace and shows him the pelican chicks. He gives Storm Boy permission to keep the pelicans but he is not all that hopeful about their survival.

- Why does Tom let Storm Boy keep the pelican chicks?
- Tom and Fingerbone Bill meet each other for the first time in this scene. What words and phrases best describe their attitude towards each other in this scene?

That night, as Tom sits at the table eating dinner. Storm Boy asks if he can borrow his father's scarf to help keep the smallest of the pelican chicks warm. He makes a bed by the fireplace and whispers to the birds before he falls asleep, 'Please don't die.'

- Why do you think Storm Boy is so determined to keep the pelican chicks alive?
- Explain the significance of Tom looking at the photographs of his wife and daughter before he goes to sleep.

* 5. IT'S AMAZING

Adam arrives at the Downer family home to drive Michael to the rescheduled board meeting. Maddy's anger returns when Michael says he has to go. She tells him that she hates her father and walks away. Her rejection of her father prompts Michael to stay. He resumes his story.

- Michael: 'I had to feed those birds eight times a day. Even Dad tried to help out.'
How do the pelicans impact on life at the shack?
Despite his complaints, what does Tom think of the pelicans?

When he is certain of the pelicans' survival, Storm Boy names the pelicans Mr Proud, Mr Ponder and Mr Percival.

- Why do you think Storm Boy delayed giving the pelicans names? Explain the significance of Mr Percival's name.



* 6. WILD THINGS NEED TO BE FREE

When Tom suggests that it is time for the pelicans to be returned to 'where they belong', Storm Boy disagrees.

- List the reasons Tom gives Storm Boy to convince him that the pelicans need to be returned to the Coorong. Imagine you are Storm Boy. Write a letter to your father that lists the reasons why the pelicans should stay.

Tom decides that the pelicans can stay until they have the skills to survive. It is up to Storm Boy to teach the birds. Fingerbone Bill and Tom watch on as Storm Boy devises ingenious ways to equip the pelicans for life in the wild.

- What skills do the pelicans need to learn? Describe Storm Boy's methods. Is he a good teacher?
- Tom: 'Why are you out here, Bill?'
Fingerbone Bill: 'The same as you. I didn't much like what happened to me in the world.'
What do Tom and Fingerbone Bill have in common?
- Fingerbone Bill: 'Some say long ago they were men riding in canoes, watching over everything. That's why there be a storm if nori or pelican is killed.'
What knowledge does Fingerbone Bill give to Storm Boy?

When all three pelicans can catch their own fish and fly, it is time for them to return to the Coorong.

- Tom: 'Right let's get this over with.'
Describe the atmosphere on the fishing boat as Tom and Storm Boy make their way to the Coorong. Why does Storm Boy want to hold Mr Percival? Were you surprised when Storm Boy became angry and yelled at Mr Percival to fly away? How did you feel when Tom and Storm Boy returned the pelicans to the wild?



* 7. ANY STORY THAT'S GOOD HAS TO GO WRONG BEFORE IT GETS BETTER

Michael calls Cal who is at his weekly Zumba class. He asks Cal to bring a copy of the original charter to the board meeting. Michael is hopeful that Cal and Julie will see things from his perspective. Having taken care of business, he continues to tell Maddy his story.

- Michael: 'I felt real loneliness for the first time.'
How does the director depict that Michael is lonely?
One night, when Tom and Storm Boy are eating a meal with Fingerbone Bill at his camp, Michael admits to his father that he has spent the day looking for Mr Percival.
- Storm Boy: 'I looked for Mr Percival today.'
Tom: 'You shouldn't be doing that.'
Storm Boy: 'I didn't see him. None of them. But I saw the hunters not far from the nest.'
Tom: 'Well, don't worry. The vote's next month. With a bit of luck, we'll get the Point turned into a sanctuary.'
Storm Boy: 'I thought you said you didn't trust people to be smart.'
Tom: 'I changed my mind.'
What does this conversation reveal about the relationship between father and son?

Later that night when Storm Boy is asleep, Fingerbone Bill confides in Tom.

- Fingerbone Bill: 'I drove cattle out here for jobs. Never looked back.'
Tom: 'What about the girl?'
Fingerbone Bill: 'I don't know what happened to her. But there was nothing I could do. She was promised to someone else. Got to be respecting that. So I had to leave. Leave my family. Leave everyone. I miss my

father. He was a tribal elder. He taught me everything about the land.'

Do you think that Fingerbone Bill's decision to retreat from the world is understandable? Why or why not? Do you think it is a wise decision? Why or why not? How is flashback used in this scene?

Having listened to Fingerbone Bill's account of the circumstances that caused him to retreat, Tom looks towards a sleeping Storm Boy, then shares his story.

- Tom: 'I was married. We had a petrol station on the outskirts of town. Just a temporary thing while I got other plans sorted. We were having a picnic. Jenny and Belle, my little girl, they went to get ice cream. Jenny wasn't speeding. Sometimes I think it's best not to have anyone to care about. That way you won't get hurt. I'd love to just go walkabout like you fellas do.'
Do you think that Tom's decision to retreat from the world is understandable? Why or why not? Do you think it is a wise decision? Why or why not? How is flashback used in this scene? Why do you think the director decided to show Storm Boy awake and listening as his father speaks?
- In what sense is the Coorong a sanctuary for Tom and Fingerbone Bill?

When Storm Boy wakes one morning, to his surprise Mr Percival is perched on top of the outhouse roof. Glad to see his son happy, Tom gives his permission for Mr Percival to stay.

- Michael: 'From that day on Mr Percival refused to ever leave my side. Not for an hour. Not for a minute. Never.'
How do the scenes that follow this statement endorse the significance of Storm Boy's relationship with Mr Percival?



- Storm Boy's resourcefulness;
- Mr Percival's loyalty;
- the love between father and son.

Add to your analysis how production elements are used to create suspense in this scene.

The action returns to the present day. When Maddy asks her grandfather if he is going to the board meeting, he replies, 'No I'm not. One thing you'll discover Mads, sometimes you forget the best things you ever learned. Like how to live like a pelican.' Michael has decided to show Maddy where he grew up.

- What do you think Michael means when he tells Maddy that one of the best things he learned was 'how to live like a pelican'?
- Michael tells Maddy, 'Newspapers, radio, they all picked up on the story. Mr Percival was famous. So was I.' Write and record the radio news report about the rescue at sea. Write and format the front page newspaper report that provides an account of the story of Tom's rescue.

Mr and Mrs Johnson give Tom a biscuit tin filled with money. The community has raised money to send Storm Boy to school at St Andrew's. He reluctantly accepts the money.

- Tom: 'Michael wouldn't want to leave.'
Mrs Johnson: 'It'd be good for him. A boy like that, he needs a proper education.'
Write an extended version of this conversation in which Tom explains to Mrs Johnson the reasons why Storm Boy would not want to leave for boarding school and Mrs Johnson explains why she thinks it would good for Storm Boy to leave for boarding school.
- Why do you think Tom accepts the money from Mrs Johnson?

Michael is leading Maddy to the helicopter that will take them to Ninety Mile Beach when his mobile phone rings. An infuriated Malcolm demands that Michael explains what is going on. Michael, displeased at being yelled at, tells Malcolm that he will vote over the phone.

- Malcolm: 'What are you up to Michael?'
Michael: 'I'm trying to save your family.'
Describe Michael and Malcolm's relationship in this scene. What does Michael mean when he tells Malcolm, 'I'm trying to save your family'? Do you think Michael is right to intervene in Malcolm and Maddy's relationship?

* 8. BAD THINGS CAN HAPPEN, YOU KNOW

Tom, Storm Boy and Mr Percival head into town. The hunters are campaigning against the sanctuary. The dog belonging to the hunter (Brendan Rock) lunges towards Mr Percival keen to attack.

- Hunter #1: 'You trying to make a point bringing that bird to town?'
Storm Boy: 'What? No.'
Hunter #1: 'Watch yourself, kid. Bad things can happen, you know. Just like that. Don't say I didn't warn you.'
Storm Boy: 'Come on Mr Percival, let's find Dad.'
How does the director want the audience to view the hunters?

In a scene that follows, Storm Boy is out with Mr Percival. A beer can floating in the water suggests the presence of the hunters. At the sound of gunshots, Mr Percival takes flight. Storm Boy calls him back and then takes chase.

- Storm Boy: 'Look what you've done.'
What happens when Storm Boy encounters the hunters? What does this scene reveal about Storm Boy's courage? What comment does this scene make about the impact of the hunters' behaviour?

When the weather changes, Storm Boy fears for his father who is out fishing. When he and Fingerbone Bill reach the shore at Ninety Mile Beach, the sky is grey overhead and huge waves are rolling in. The motor on the boat has shut down and Tom is stranded. The situation worsens when the boat capsizes.

- Write an analysis of how production elements are used to portray:
 - the danger of the situation for Tom;



* 9. I'M NOT GOING

In this sequence set at Ninety Mile Beach and the Coorong, past and present collide.

- Storm Boy: 'I'm not going.'
Tom: 'You need to think of it as an opportunity.'
Why doesn't Storm Boy want to leave Ninety Mile Beach? Why does Tom think Storm Boy should leave for boarding school? Now that he is older, what does Storm Boy think about his father's insistence that he go to school?
- Explain the significance of Michael taking off his shoes and socks when he arrives at Ninety Mile Beach.

As Michael reconnects with his past, the phone rings. It is Malcolm. The board meeting has commenced and everyone is ready to vote. Cal has found the copy of the original charter as Michael requested. Michael asks him to turn to page 27A. Malcolm is annoyed by the delay.

- Michael: 'Does it say in Provision 18B that the Board has the right to delay any vote so that an independent review could be taken in the case of exceptional circumstances?'
What does Michael hope to achieve? How does the director show that Malcolm is no longer in control of the board meeting? Explain the significance of Julie eating Lolly Gobble Bliss Bombs. Who is satisfied with the outcome of the board meeting? Why? Who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the board meeting? Why?
Compare this board meeting to the board meeting at the beginning of the film. What do the meetings have in common? How do they differ? Do you think Michael has changed?

Despite disrupting the vote at the board meeting and infuriating Malcolm, Michael does want to rebuild the relationship between Malcolm and Maddy. He reminds Maddy that Malcolm is not a bad man but rather a businessman. He does not want his granddaughter to behave as he did towards his father,

'I never really made peace with my father after we fought. I never came back here. I made that decision in anger. It was the biggest mistake of my life.'

- What is regret? What does Michael regret? Write a personal narrative or an imaginative narrative about a regret.
- Maddy: 'Well, I like being angry.'
Michael: 'Mads, there's no future in that. Think about it, will you? You have to. It's so important.'
Why do you think Maddy likes being angry? Is Michael right when he tells Maddy that she should not be angry with her father?
- Explain the significance of Maddy taking off her shoes and socks.



* 10. DON'T YOU WANT TO SAY GOODBYE TO MR PERCIVAL?

Maddy and Michael head to the sanctuary. Michael doesn't immediately answer when Maddy asks what happened to Mr Percival. Once again the past and present collide. Michael finds himself sitting beside his younger self.

In the flashback scene that follows, Tom appears on the verandah of the shack with Storm Boy's packed suitcase. It is time for him to say goodbye.

- Hunter #1: 'He attacked me. You saw him. I had no choice. I warned you.'
Why does Mr Percival swoop the hunters? Is the hunter's justification of shooting Mr Percival credible? Why does Storm Boy blame himself for Mr Percival's injuries?

At the shack, Storm Boy tends to Mr Percival's wounds telling the pelican, 'You're the best friend I ever had. Please don't die.' Tom and Fingerbone Bill watch from a distance and then later retreat to the verandah. Storm Boy stays inside by the fire with Mr Percival.

- Write an analysis of how production elements are used in the scene depicting the burial of Mr Percival.

Storm Boy tells his father, 'I'm ready to go now' and in a subsequent scene aboard the fishing boat, Storm Boy leaves Ninety Mile Beach for St Andrew's.

- How does the director use costume to show that Storm Boy has changed?

As Michael and Maddy approach the sanctuary, Michael explains:

Mr Percival's life wasn't in vain. After I'd gone to school, Council heard what the hunters had done. They doubled the size of the sanctuary. Twenty thousand acres, the largest in the Southern Hemisphere. They gave it a lease for a hundred years with an option to extend.

When they reach the sanctuary, Michael is pleased to see the statue of Mr Percival.

- What does Michael mean when he tells Maddy 'a bird like him never dies'?
- Michael gives Maddy the locket that once belonged to his mother. Explain the significance of Michael's gift to his granddaughter.
- Michael: 'I think I'll just sit here for a bit.'
List the closing shots of the film and explain the significance of each of the shots that you have listed.

Symbols

Symbolism is when something is used to represent something else. Symbols are used in *Storm Boy* to add to the viewer's understanding of the narrative, characters, settings and ideas.

For example, there is a lookout post not far from the beach shack and another lookout post on the beach adjacent to the Downer property. While we know that Tom erected the

lookout post to ensure Storm Boy did not lose his way on the beach, we assume that the lookout post on the beach adjacent to the Downer property has been erected for a similar reason. What do you think the lookout posts represent?

Name, draw and explain the meaning of five symbols that feature in *Storm Boy*.



Symbol	Illustration	Meaning

Production elements

When we watch a film like *Storm Boy*, we are caught up in the story that it is telling and accept everything that happens on the screen as natural. In fact, everything that we see has been carefully chosen and arranged, on the screen and within the story, to have a specific effect on the audience watching.

Understanding *Storm Boy* involves an investigation of the production elements employed in telling the story.

- Working with a partner, describe the way the director of *Storm Boy* has used one production element. Your analysis should provide a detailed description of how meaning is constructed through this production element. Use PowerPoint or Google Slides to present your analysis to the class. Limit your presentation to five slides. Your presentation should use words and images. You may incorporate video clips.

Extended text responses

It is important that secondary students have the opportunity to write extended interpretations about texts. The topics listed below require students to draw on their knowledge and understanding of *Storm Boy*. Students are expected to take a position and to then justify that position by using direct and indirect evidence.

Text response topics can also be used to generate online forums, debates and panel discussions. Teachers may also choose to use some of the questions featured in other sections of the study guide as text response topics.

- ‘*Storm Boy* is a story of unconventional friendships.’ Discuss.
- ‘Michael and Maddy have a lot in common.’ Do you agree?
- ‘It is never easy to let go of what we love.’ How is this idea explored in *Storm Boy*?

Creative responses

Your challenge is to complete an individual creative project based on *Storm Boy*. Options for projects are listed below. You may design your own project. All projects must be discussed with and approved by your teacher.

Some possible projects include:

- Write the newspaper article that Maddy shares with her grandfather.
- Make Michael Kingley’s biscuit tin of keepsakes.
- Devise an original board game based on *Storm Boy*. Your board game should draw on the narrative, setting, characters, ideas and symbols of *Storm Boy*. Make sure that your game pieces are well made and the packaging is sturdy. Don’t forget to write instructions.
- Write the script of a scene to add to *Storm Boy*.
- Use iMovie to make a trailer for *Storm Boy*.

From novella to film

THIS SECTION OF THE STUDY GUIDE HAS BEEN WRITTEN FOR USE WITH STUDENTS WHO ARE STUDYING THE NOVELLA. TEACHERS MAY ADAPT THE SUGGESTED TASK, ASKING STUDENTS TO COMPARE A PRINT TEXT THAT THEY HAVE READ WITH ITS ADAPTATION TO FILM.

An adaptation of a text occurs when some or all of its plot, characters and language are transferred to another form. An adaptation alters the reader’s experience of the original text.

Storm Boy is an adaptation of Colin Thiele’s novella of the same title. Do you think the director Shawn Seet has made an effective adaptation of Colin Thiele’s *Storm Boy*? To help you decide the answer to this question, complete the following activity.

FOR PRIMARY STUDENTS

Your task is to compare the book and the film. Use [Table 5](#) overleaf to list five similarities and differences about the plot, characters and setting.

FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

1. Divide an A3 page into four equal sections. Use the headings: Same, Different, In and Out to make notes that compare the texts. In the Same section of the page list the similarities. In the Different section of the page list the differences. In the In section of the page list features of the adaptation that are not included in the original text. In the Out section of the page list features of the original text that have been omitted from the adaptation.
2. Spend time as a class discussing the adaptation. It is important to acknowledge that changes can at times be explained by the use of the medium of film. What has been added and what has been omitted is also a way to determine a director’s purpose and bias.
3. Locate reviews of the adaptation. Read the reviews and spend time discussing the opinions of the adaptation with your peers. Deciding whether or not you endorse the opinions expressed in the reviews will help you to form your own opinion of the adaptation.
4. Your task is to present an evaluative comparison of Colin Thiele’s novella *Storm Boy* with Shawn Seet’s film adaptation. Your response should consist of a five-minute oral response supported by a PowerPoint or Google Slides presentation.
5. Remember, you will need to frame a contention and plan your response. Setting a focus allows you to select from your knowledge of the original text and its adaptation, and in turn allows you to develop a critical evaluation rather than a list of similarities and differences.

Plot

SAME	DIFFERENT

Characters

Settings

Behind the Scenes

* SHAWN SEET – DIRECTOR

Shawn Seet's debut feature *Two Fists, One Heart* received critical acclaim and a Best Feature Film Direction nomination from the ADG. He has been awarded by the ADG for Drama Direction for *Underbelly – A Tale of Two Cities* and by AACTA for Best Direction Television Drama for *The Code*. The telemovie *Peter Allen: Not the Boy Next Door* for Shine and the Seven Network has garnered Seet both AACTA and AWG wins for Best Director.

Seet's television credits include: *The Secret Life of Us*, *Underbelly – A Tale of Two Cities*, *Business as Usual*, *Underbelly – Razor*, *Underbelly – Squizzy*, *My Place*, *Slide*, *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*, *Camp*, *Love Child*, *The Code*, *Hiding*, *Deep Water* and the Olivia Newton-John telemovie.

Seet saw *Storm Boy* (1976) when he was twelve.

* CAST

STORM BOY FINN LITTLE
MICHAEL KINGLEY..... GEOFFREY RUSH
HIDEAWAY TOM JAI COURTNEY
FINGERBONE BILL TREVOR JAMIESON
MADELINE DOWNER..... MORGANA DAVIES
MALCOLM DOWNER..... ERIK THOMSON
CAL EVANS PAUL BLACKWELL
JULIE SIMS CHANTAL CONTOURI
MURRAY JOHNSON RORY WALKER
PEARL JOHNSON..... MARTHA LOTT
HUNTER #1 BRENDAN ROCK
HUNTER #2 JAMES SMITH
FINGERBONE (Bill's father) DAVID GULPILIL
ANGELA CAROLINE MIGNONE

* CREDITS

Director SHAWN SEET **Producers** MATTHEW STREET, MICHAEL BOUGHEN **Screenplay** JUSTIN MONJO
Executive Producers ROBERT SLAVIERO, GEOFFREY RUSH, CHRISTOPHER FIGG, ROBERT WHITEHOUSE, JUSTIN DEIMEN, SHERMAN NG **Co-Producer** PAUL RANFORD **Associate Producer** KYLIE MASCORD **Director Of Photography** BRUCE YOUNG ACS **Film Editor** DENISE HARATZIS **Composer** ALAN JOHN **Production Design** MELINDA DORING **Costume Design** LOUISE MCCARTHY **Hair and Makeup Designer** TRACY PHILLPOT
Animal Coordinator ANIMALS ALL AROUND, ZELIE BULLEN **Pelican Trainer** PAUL MANDER CRAIG BULLEN

Storm Boy online

Official website: <https://stormboythefilm.com>

IMDB: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3340446/>



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