



TEACHING NOTES



Dust Makers

Edited by Penny Jaye and R.A. Stephens

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Reading Level: 13+ years

Dust Makers is a collection about our impact on the world around us. With a focus on simple sustainability, care for the environment and for each other, these stories consider the impact we have on the spaces we live in and the legacy we leave for the future. We want it to be about our consideration of what is around us and what we leave for the future. We want the stories to be contemporary, historical or futuristic with consideration of the impact we make on our environment and on one another.

Themes

- Environment • Climate Change • Rural Australia
- Mental health • Humanity • Truth seeking • Sustainability

Discussion Questions & Classroom Activities:

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. a) Who are the most developed characters in the collection? Do we understand what these characters want, and how the story's conflict stands in their way?
b) Can you tell if the characters in the collection are round or flat characters? Why? The following can be reviewed for information about round and flat characters: [Britannica](#) [Youtube](#)
 - Ask students to complete the following table after choosing a story from the collection to review:

Character	Round	Flat	Justification

2. Choose a story from the collection. What are key elements and signifiers that help to convey the main message or theme of your chosen story?
3. Did you relate to any specific short story in this collection?
4. How do you think editors would have planned this collection and the order, can you see any relation between the stories?
5. How might point of view affect a story? How might a story initially written in first person change if its point of view was third person? How could it differ if told by another character?
6. Do any of these stories make you think about the current anxiety of the situations in the world? Do you relate to any? If you were challenged to write a story with the theme of "current environmental issue" what would it make you write?
7. How do the different landscapes of the various stories demonstrate about the theme of said story?

Story	Key features of this setting	What this represents about the theme

SAMPLE TEACHING IDEAS FOR SELECTED STORIES

A Paper Legacy

1. Assuming global sea levels were to rise 5 metres in the next 50 years, discuss which major cities would be first to disappear underwater (based on current height above sea level).
2. Now consider a much more extreme scenario of 50 metres - which areas of earth's surface would still remain above water?
3. How much would society change as a result of rising sea levels?

4. How would the global climate and nature change as a result of rising sea levels?
5. Discuss how a real Wind-house might be engineered:
 - What materials would be best for construction?
 - How would it be safely tethered to the sea floor?
 - What forces of nature would it be subjected to?
 - What elements would be required to make it fully self-sustainable?
6. What kind of major social issues could humans face as a result of such an unstable climate and shrinking landscape?

Touching the Sky

1. The inspiration for this story came from the author growing up in a drought on a property in Central Queensland. Knowing this how can you see that inspiration reflected in the story?
2. Research some of the following topics: causes of drought, effects of drought, and living and surviving in droughts. What can we do to help drought stricken communities?
3. “In 2011–2012, 7.6% of city residents accessed MBS mental health services in cities, compared to 3.0% in remote areas and just 1.5% in very remote areas—indicating that very remote residents accessed mental health services at only one-fifth of the rate of major city residents.” (The Centre for International Economics, 2015). Explore why there’s such a difference in mental health between rural and urban centres and what can be done to bridge that gap.
4. What are some of the benefits of upcycling and how can we integrate it into our everyday lives?
5. What is the difference between regular farming and sustainable farming? What defines sustainable farming?
6. What are some of the ways the drought has affected Zander and his family?
7. What could have helped his dad?
8. How could Zander and his mum work through their grief together?
9. What do Zander and Bonnie have in common?
10. What climate change event/s happened to compound the effects of the drought?
11. Why do you think horses have a problem with camels at first? How do you think Zander can get Jago to like Ruby?

The Hive

1. Illustrate one of the following, using the descriptions in ‘The Hive’ story as inspiration:
 - Create a coloured illustration of the city, Sythana. Include the types of buildings depicted, such as The Hive Consortium, The Pod Metropolis, and the various types of transportation.
 - Draw a cross-section diagram (black and white or colour) of The Hive Consortium building as you imagine it. (You may like to include areas such as the hives, garden, jungles, laboratories and recreation rooms.)
 - Draw a labelled diagram of Cora’s outfit including the helmet, coat and Ridge Treader boots. What other features could you add to the outfit that would give extra protection from the hot, dusty climate?

2. Name four strategies Cora used to improve her chances of success in obtaining employment at The Hive?
3. How are the surroundings depicted in 'The Hive' different from our present environment?
4. List four things we could do to prevent a dust-bowl, dystopian environment like one in 'The Hive'.
5. Why are bees important in our lives? Name five products that bees produce which we commonly use in our everyday lives?
6. Tick any of the following problems that may be a threat to the survival of bees:
 - Poor land use practices
 - Poor agricultural practices
 - Pesticides
 - Pollution
 - Climate change
 - Alien species
7. Fill in the missing words:

Bees are an essential species. If bees became _____ it would threaten the _____ of living things because their food sources such as _____, _____, and _____, depend on insect _____.

nuts, berries, fruits, survival, pollination, extinct.

8. View the following YouTube video: The Death of Bees Explained:

<https://www.science.org.au/curious/everything-else/bees>

- a) Summarise the information in a short paragraph and illustrate what part of the video impacted you the most.
- b) Do you have any ideas you could put into practice to support the survival of bees on our planet?

The Aria of the Ocean

Before reading:

1. Discuss as a class the way we do these things today:
 - o Light and heat our homes
 - o Wash ourselves
 - o Lubricate engines and equipment

After reading:

1. Discuss the meanings of these words:
 - o whale
(A very large marine mammal with a streamlined hairless body, a horizontal tail fin, and a blowhole on top of the head for breathing.)
 - o whaler ship
(A ship built or modified to hunt and capture whales.)
 - o marines
(Soldiers given the job of keeping order amongst prisoners.)

o aria

(A solo song for a singer.)

o ship's boy

(A low-ranking boy who does odd jobs on a ship, often including special tasks for the officers.)

o transportation

(The transport by ship of convicted criminals from one country to another.)

o 'Thar she blows!'

(The call from the man in the lookout at the top of a mast if he saw a whale spouting water in the distance.)

2. Find England and Australia on a map or globe (preferably a real globe).
3. Compare how fast we can fly from England to Australia today and how long it took to travel by ship in 1791 when the early settlers first arrived in Australia. (Approximately 19 hours compared to five months.)
4. Why did Robert think the smoke from the cooking fires smelt unusual? (Firewood from trees in different countries creates different scents when burned.)
5. After reading and discussing *The Aria of the Ocean*, write two or three sentences about what you've learnt about whales, particularly southern right whales, and the whaling industry.
6. Draw a picture of a southern right whale, adding your own patches of white to make an individual pattern.

Terra Firma

1. How would you describe the tone of the first two paragraphs? Give a quote to support your response.
2. Find an example of a metaphor in the story. What effect does this technique have on the reader?
3. How would you describe Ada as a character? Use two adjectives/phrases and provide a quote from the text to support each.
4. The author makes several references to the sun. What do you think this could symbolise?
5. This short story explores the theme of sustainability. What other themes are present in this story? What do you think the author is asking us to think about?
6. *Terra Firma* asks us to consider the issue of climate change facing the world today. Watch Greta Thunberg's speech to the world leaders at the UN Climate Action Summit in 2019. Compare and contrast the ways in which her persuasive speech and the short story address the issue. Which do you think is the most effective in conveying its message? Why?
7. The idea of terraforming has existed for a long time and has been explored in a number of science fiction texts. Conduct some research on the concept. What is terraforming? Consider the title of the short story. How has the author used a play on words here?
8. Rewrite the final scene in the farm house from the point of view of one of the other characters in the story
9. Using the text, create a blackout theme that explores the theme of sustainability.
10. Imagine you are Emily's teacher and write her assessment task comment.
11. Select a passage from the story and draw a mental picture of what you see. You may like to consider

Emily's view of the farm through the window, the farmhouse or the classroom. Once complete, annotate the image with passages from the text.

The Invasion

1. What kind of person do you initially think Sierra is? What has the author said to help you think this way?
2. Does your opinion of her change or evolve as the story progresses?
3. What are the problems facing the main character?
4. What is your first impression of Lauren? Why do you think you feel this way?
5. What do you think was driving Lauren to behave like this at the start? What caused her to change?
6. If you had been the person to observe the fish tank incident, would it have concerned you to begin with? Does this change as the story moves on?
7. What are the consequences of the tank dumping?
8. Have you ever seen someone damaging the environment and felt compelled to act? When/how?
9. In your opinion, what is an environmental concern facing society today?
10. How do you think the changes we saw in the story could play out into the future for the characters or the river? Consider the relationship changes, environment changes and future job options.
11. List 5 of the adjectives that you found the most powerful in this story.
12. Can you list the stages of a narrative found in this story?
13. What tools has the author used to help you create a picture in your mind of the characters?
14. List all the words used in place of the word 'said'. Keep this list for future use in your stories.
15. Write a prequel paragraph to the story – think about what life would have been like for Sierra before she moved schools.

Before the Dust Makers

1. Consider how authors create a sense of place in their stories. What senses are observed and recorded? What details are included and which ones might be left out? What elements draw your attention to environmental issues and/or the way a person interacts/responds to their environment?
2. Who are the main and secondary characters in each story? What do they need/want? What is their relationship with their environment and to other people? How do their decisions impact their environment and relationships? What could have happened differently in these stories?
3. What are the main causes, as identified through these short stories, of environmental damage? To what extent do you agree with these assumptions? How might your view differ and why?
4. What are the elements of environment that humanity requires to survive? Identify two or three of these and write a creative writing piece exploring the consequences when/if these were to be removed or destroyed.
5. Annika has a strong connection to the jungle. Do you feel a strong connection to a place in nature? Write a free verse poem to describe that place and how it makes you feel.

6. Choose an agricultural crop and research the environmental/community issues at stake for this crop/business. What are the sustainability decisions that need to be considered before development? Consider the pros and cons of agricultural investment.
7. Present information as a Powerpoint or conduct a debate around the issues involved.
8. Do a case study on a farm/crop to investigate sustainability considerations.

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE AND PLOT

1. Choose a story. Why do you think the author chose to narrate this story through different perspectives?
2. Find an alternative viewpoint or 'gap' in the story and write 500-1000 words. Consider the narrator's motivations and backstory. How will these things influence their voice?
3. Identify different plot points in the narrative, using the following diagram and descriptions. Discuss differences of opinion in the class.

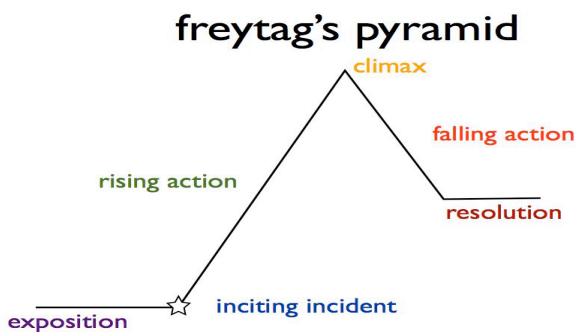


Diagram Source.

Exposition: Introductory information to establish the setting and provide background information about the characters.

Inciting incident: A moment or event that acts as the catalyst for the rising action in the story and causes a significant change in the protagonist's life.

Rising action: Events and choices that drive the action towards the climax. The rising action often involves making allies, friends and enemies; encountering setbacks; and finding solutions or partial-solutions to problems.

Climax: The moment of greatest tension in the story, where the protagonist is tested and the deeper truth of their identity is revealed.

Falling action: Events that follow the climax and portray its aftermath to lessen the narrative tension.

Resolution: The ending of the story, which often establishes a 'new normal' for one or more characters. Resolutions may involve various degrees of happiness or sorrow; involve a plot twist; or feature a level of ambiguity. However, resolutions usually stay true to the overall tone of the narrative and suggest how the protagonist has changed, even if they do not neatly tie up all the loose ends.

CREATING THE ANTHOLOGIES

The following is a word from editor R.A Stephens.

I previously was inspired to encourage new and established writers in the short story collections, *Crossed Spaces* and *The Opposite of Disappearing*. Authors enjoyed the challenge and there was interest in more short story collections. At Rhiza Edge we love to explore issues that are current, however my personal passion is for protection and care for our environment and the impact we leave. *Dust Makers* is not about any specific topic within environmental activism, but anything relevant to having our young people particularly consider their impact on the world around them.

In putting together this collection I was challenged in what topics writers and readers would find important in considering the impact we have on our world, not just the environment but the people around us. The final stories encouraged me to ponder many ideas and issues and I hope they also do the same for the readers.

CREATIVE WRITING EXERCISES

Write your own short story based on a current global environmental issue. Use some of these tips from Rhiza Edge author Lynne Stringer.

A lot of people think writing a 50,000-word novel is a monumental task, but believe it or not, it can be a lot harder to write a short story than a long one. It requires an idea that you can hold in your hand.

A short story is a story from 1000–7500 words. Finding a story idea that can fit into that word count can be tricky because, in a short story, you have to do the same thing you have to do in a full-length novel. You need to have an introduction, complication and resolution, and the story should feel complete or the reader will leave it feeling dissatisfied.

Here are a few tips that might help you as you experiment with writing a short story.

1. Try and find a simple idea

This can be trickier than it sounds, but a simple idea will take fewer words to tell, thereby reducing the word count. This comes back to what I said in the first paragraph about an idea you can hold in your hand. The more compact your story is, the shorter it can be, but it can still be intimate, entertaining and engrossing. A simple idea doesn't mean boring.

2. Only do what you must to set the scene

There's always a temptation when writing any story to include loads of backstory and description to set the scene. Even in a full-length novel, too much of this can be a problem, but certainly in a short story, if you include a lot of that, you won't fit in your plot. Try to be as lean as possible without resorting to telling the story instead of showing it.

3. Cut down the number of characters

The more characters you have, the longer your story will be as you introduce them all and establish their place in the story. Try and limit the number of characters as much as possible. It will leave more space for the plot.

About the Authors and Editors

Penny Jaye

From picture books to young adult fiction, Penny Jaye writes about themes that matter. Her YA novel, *Out of the Cages* published by Rhiza Press, addresses modern day slavery. *The Other Brother* is a picture book about belonging and the power of compassion. Penny lives in greater western Sydney with her family and enjoys juggling life with various writing and research commitments. She loves watching the sunrise, lunches by the river and being tucked up in bed to read a new book!

Penny also writes as Penny Reeve and Ella Shine.



Jackie Randall

Jackie Randall writes stories about children in exciting historical situations using as many facts as she can. Her favourite part of writing is creating the characters and their stories, and her second-favourite part is doing tonnes of research to tie history into her characters' lives.

Her self-published novel *Emelin* is medieval historical fiction about an 11-year-old orphan girl and the story of her gift and her fight for survival.

Jackie has also written about a flood in the Hawkesbury region in 1806, about a shipwreck off the Victorian coast in 1878, and also another medieval historical fiction novel. She hopes to publish these books in the near future.

Jackie has also visited a place in southern Australia known as Head of Bight, where for a few months of the year southern right whales visit and take care of their young. She has heard the whale song and seen the whales there.



Simone Field

Simone Field was born and raised in Perth, Western Australia. If her nose isn't buried in a book, she may be found spending time with her husband, children and extended family, or at her local community church. As a well-travelled primary school teacher, Simone holds stories and words dear to her heart and loves spending time with children, educating and advocating for them. *The Invasion* is Simone's first published work.



Bethea Todhunter

Bethea is a high school teacher, writer and mum who writes stories for young people with big questions. She lives by the beach on Port Phillip Bay in Melbourne and is inspired daily by her beautiful natural surrounds and the innate wisdom of children.

When she's not teaching or writing, Bethea can be found exploring with her two boys and searching for lost Lego pieces.



Rosanne Hawke

Rosanne Hawke grew up in a drought in Outback Central QLD. When she wasn't at her one teacher school or on the hour-long bus run in a converted cattle truck, she walked with her kelpie-cross dog, climbed windmills, fell off horses and was last in the bath. She learned never to waste water. Rosanne has authored over 30 books for children and YA. She has been a teacher, a missionary in Pakistan, and a lecturer in creative writing at Tabor Adelaide. Her books explore cultural, faith and social justice themes. She writes of displacement, reconciliation and tells stories of children unheard. Her novels include Beyond Borders series, *Fozia and the Quest of the Lost Dog* and *Shahana: Through My Eyes*. Rosanne now lives in country SA in an old Cornish farmhouse with underground rooms.



Jean Saxby

Jean Saxby BSc DipEd is a teacher, blogger and #1 Best-Selling and multi-award-winning author.

She writes fiction, non-fiction, and picture books, and promotes a better life and well-being.

Her favourite things are family, fur babies, fantastic stories and the beach.

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Ebony Frost

Ebony Frost is a West Australian writer, photographer, and mother of two.

Her enthusiasm for saving the planet springs from a childhood filled with farm animals and fresh air. An ever-growing curiosity for the world led her to study journalism and creative writing at university, followed by a career in marketing and events, both in Perth and London.

Ebony's short-fiction has been published in anthologies and long-listed for the Australian Writers Centre's Furious Fiction competition.

Inspired by her experience of parenting during a pandemic, Ebony published children's picture books 'UH OH It's a Panda-emic!' in 2020 followed by 'Lockdown Land' in 2021.

Follow her on Twitter @ebonyfrost



R.A Stephens

Rochelle Stephens is the Director of Wombat Books and Rhiza Press. With qualifications in teaching, counselling, editing and publishing, Rochelle brings expertise and knowledge to her work in publishing and editing. Since pioneering Wombat Books, Rochelle has been actively involved in every aspect of story development and book production. She is also a writer and editor and was inspired to start short story collections to give voice to new and aspiring authors.