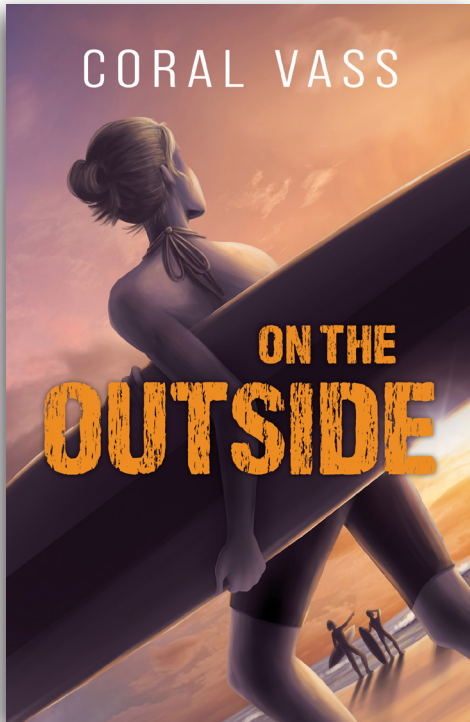

Teachers' Notes



ON THE OUTSIDE

Coral Vass

ISBN: 9781761113420

Reading level: 14+

BOOK SUMMARY

Emma and Noor share everything: their love of surfing, summer skies and a friendship as deep as the ocean.

But when Emma's parents pressure her into accepting a place at the prestigious St Jude's Ladies College, things begin to shift. At the same time, deeply-rooted racism starts to resurface in their school, within their community and even at their local beach.

Emma finds herself immobilised by fear. Should she stay silent and move schools, or should she speak out and risk everything?

A powerful story of friendship, courage and finding your voice when it matters most.

THEMES

• Racism • Inclusion • Friendship & Community • Independence & Confidence •

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 Rhiza Edge, PO Box 302, Chinchilla, Queensland 4413 admin@wombathriza.com.au

**Coral Vass is available for author talks and workshops.
 Contact Rhiza Edge for more information.**

On the Outside Teachers' Notes can be used in schools (independent learning, small groups, and whole classes); at home with caregivers; and as part of mental health support programs facilitated by counsellors, psychologists, children's charities, etc.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Coral Vass is an award-winning children's author, presenter, editor and reviewer. With a background in Media, Coral has 30 published children's books. Many of her books have appeared on ABCTV's Playschool, UK's Story Den on Milkshake TV, as well as on Australia's StoryBox Library. Coral loves to visit schools, where she runs writing workshops and shares the power of story. Coral is an ambassador for Reading Out of Poverty and is passionate about giving all children an equal opportunity to read.

This is Coral's second Rhiza Shorts book. Her first, *The Day the Bridge Fell*, is an historical fiction based on the collapse of Melbourne's West Gate Bridge in 1970.

AUTHOR NOTES

Racism is a painful and destructive reality in many societies. I have witnessed it not only within my own culture but also in the various countries I've called home. I spent my early childhood in Bangladesh, where my parents dedicated their lives to supporting the poor and marginalised, and I grew up in an environment that taught me to value the dignity and rights of every person.

In 2001, my husband and I lived and studied in Indonesia, and in 2007 we moved to Japan for three years. These experiences deepened my love for people and strengthened my respect for the richness of different cultures.

I wrote this book because I wanted to confront the harsh truth of racism. Unfortunately, it's an aspect of society that fuels hatred, intolerance, and division. Through this story, I hope to show that when we move beyond fear and misunderstanding, whether related to culture, religion, or gender, we open the door to compassion and connection. Ultimately, I wrote this book to encourage kindness, empathy, and a more inclusive world.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

RACISM

1. From your own understanding, what is the underlying factor that provokes racism?
2. After Emma's speech, Cooper immediately confronts her and Noor. The speech does not eliminate racism - it provokes a direct backlash. Do you think speaking up always makes things better, or can it sometimes make things temporarily worse? Does the book suggest that the backlash is a reason not to speak up, or a reason the speaking was necessary?
3. This story raises important questions about race, privilege, belonging, and moral courage. Give three examples of each.
4. The September attacks and the Cronulla riots occurred over twenty years ago. Do you think racism is still an issue in Australia today? Why or why not? How can you help shed light on the ongoing conversation around race in your school and community?
5. List the subtle and overt ways bias and racism deeply affected individuals and the communities in this story.

INCLUSION & COMMUNITY

1. How did Emma's speech have an impact on herself, her friends, her parents and the school community?
2. Think about your school. How do you think you could make a positive change that provokes inclusivity; making sure all students are included in all aspects of school life?
3. How might you, as a student, help build an even better culture of acceptance in your school?
4. What is a hijab? Why do some cultures wear this piece of clothing?
5. Identify some things you and your family do which are cultural (eg: dress, holidays, activities, phrases, jokes)
6. Emma's father tells her to 'be careful' and not be 'in the wrong place at the wrong time'. His advice is protective, but it also implies that the safest response is avoidance. Ms Hafez' assignment, by contrast, asks students to think about 'ways that we can, as a community, counteract negative impacts.' Which adult's approach do you think is more helpful, and why? Is there a way to follow both pieces of advice at the same time?

FRIENDSHIP

1. What are the defining characteristics that make for a good friend? In what ways did Emma show these qualities? In what ways did Noor show these qualities?
2. Describe a time you had to find the courage to stand up and speak up for someone else?
3. 'In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.'- Martin Luther King. What do you think the quote means? How does this quote from MLK play out in Emma's actions and inactions? Give an example of both.

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INDEPENDENCE & CONFIDENCE

- 1.** The book suggests Emma only acts when racism reaches her personally. Is this realistic?
- 2.** Is it fair to expect people to act before it affects them directly? What would need to change for bystanders to intervene earlier?
- 3.** Do you think it was wrong of Emma's parents to force her to move schools? Why or why not?
- 4.** Emma wasn't always brave when she encountered racism and injustice. What helped her gain more confidence? What can we do when we see injustice?
- 5.** In what ways is surfing (reading the waves, riding the waves and wiping out) an allegory for Emma's character and confidence growth?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

THE INCIDENT ESCALATION TIMELINE

The book contains a chain of racist incidents that escalate in severity and proximity to Emma. Students create a visual timeline on a long strip of paper or digitally.

For each incident (carpark harassment, shop vandalism, rock through window, beach assault, courtyard fight, Cooper's confrontation), students place a card on the timeline containing: what happened, who was targeted, who witnessed it, what was done, and what was not done.

Above each card, students rate the severity on a scale of 1-10. Below each card, they rate how close it was to Emma personally (stranger > acquaintance > best friend's family > Emma herself).

THE SPEECH WORKSHOP

Emma writes and delivers a speech about racism, courage, and inclusion. Students write their own 2-minute speech (approximately 300 words) on an issue they care about in their own school or community.

Structure guide:

- Opening: name the issue. Why does it matter to you personally?
- Evidence: describe two specific things you have seen or experienced (these can be from the book, the news, or from real life - students choose their comfort level).
- Call to action: what is one concrete thing your audience could do differently starting tomorrow?
- Closing: end with a sentence that you want people to remember.

Students deliver their speech to the class or in small groups. After each speech, listeners write one sentence on a card: 'The thing that stayed with me was...' and hand it to the speaker.

WALK IN THEIR SHOES - PERSPECTIVE SWAP

The book is told entirely from Emma's perspective. Students never hear Noor's inner thoughts directly.

Divide the class into pairs. One student takes Emma's role, the other takes Noor's. Give each pair one of the following scenarios drawn from the book:

- a) Emma tells Noor she visited St Jude's and 'it's kind of a really nice school!'
- b) Emma leaves Noor's sleepover after the rock is thrown through the window.
- c) Emma catches a wave out of turn to avoid answering Noor's question about changing schools.
- d) Emma recommends Noor to lead the action group instead of leading it herself.

Each pair writes a short dialogue (10-15 lines) showing the connection from both characters' internal perspectives.- what each person says out loud AND what they are thinking but not saying (written in brackets).

Class sharing: read selected dialogues out loud. Discuss: in how many scenarios is there a gap between

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what is said and what is felt? What does that gap cost the friendship? What would happen if both characters said exactly what they were thinking?

REWRITE THE ENDING

Imagine if Emma chose to go to St Jude's Ladies College after all. Write a different ending to this story. Would Emma have still been as effective if she moved schools? Why or why not?

NEWS REPORT ROLEPLAY

Emma's speech goes viral after the school posts a 30-second clip on Instagram. A local radio station calls to request an interview.

In groups of 3-4, students create a simulated news segment about the events at Beachside High. Each group must include:

- a news anchor who introduces the story
- Emma (interviewed about her speech and motivations)
- Noor (interviewed about her family's experiences)
- one additional voice: this could be the principal, Cooper, Ms Hafez, Tarek (Noor's father), Emma's dad, or a community member
- Groups have to prepare a 3-minute segment. Every person interviewed must be asked 'What do you think should happen next?' - each character's answer should be different.
- Class discussion after performances: did any group's Cooper express remorse, or did he double down? Did any group's Emma's dad express conflict between his protective instincts and his pride in his daughter? Which character was hardest to write for, and why?

RESEARCH SOCIETAL CHANGES

Research the main changes to society since the September 11 attacks. From your own research and your reading of this book, how did 9/11 affect people's attitudes and fears?

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

CURRICULUM V9

YEAR 6

English

AC9E6LA01 - understand that language varies as levels of formality and social distance increase

AC9E6LA02 - understand the uses of objective and subjective language, and identify bias

AC9E6LE01 - identify responses to characters and events in literary texts, drawn from historical, social or cultural contexts, by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors

YEAR 7

English, Civics and Citizenship, History

AC9E7LA01 - understand how language expresses and creates personal and social identities

AC9E7LE01 - identify and explore ideas, points of view, characters, events and/or issues in literary texts, drawn from historical, social and/or cultural contexts, by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors

AC9E7LE02 - form an opinion about characters, settings and events in texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others' opinions and justifying a response

AC9E7LE03 - explain the ways that literary devices and language features such as dialogue, and images are used to create character, and to influence emotions and opinions in different types of texts

AC9E7LE05 - identify and explain the ways that characters, settings and events combine to create meaning in narratives

AC9E7LY05 - use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring, questioning and inferring to analyse and summarise information and ideas

AC9HC10K01 - the key features and values of Australia's system of government compared with at least one other democratic or non-democratic system of government in the Asia-Pacific region

AC9HC10K02 - the Australian Government's role and responsibilities at a regional and global level

AC9HC10K04 - how Australia's international legal obligations shape Australian law and government policies, including those relating to First Nations Australians, and the issues related to the application of these obligations

AC9HC10K05 - the challenges to and ways of sustaining a resilient democracy and a cohesive society in Australia and/or in our region or globally

AC9HC10S01 - develop and modify questions to investigate Australia's political and legal systems, and contemporary civic issues

AC9HC10S04 - evaluate the methods or strategies and outcomes related to making decisions about civic

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participation

AC9HH10K13 - the continuing efforts to create change in the civil rights and freedoms in Australia, for First Nations Australians, migrants and women

AC9HH10K14 - changing historical perspectives over time in relation to the developments in technology, public health, longevity, standard of living in the 20th century, and concern for the environment and sustainability

AC9HH10K15 - the origins and significance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including Australia's involvement in the development of the declaration

AC9HH10K16 - causes and effects of the significant events and developments of the major global influences on Australia in the post-Second World War period

AC9HH10K17 - changing social, political, economic, cultural, environmental and technological conditions, and the causes of a major global influence in Australia

AC9HH10K18 - continuities and changes in perspectives, responses, beliefs and values that have influenced the Australian way of life

AC9HH10K19 - the effects of global influences on Australia's changing identity as a nation and its international relationships

YEAR 8

English

AC9E8LE01 - explain the ways that ideas and points of view may represent the values of individuals and groups in literary texts, drawn from historical, social and cultural contexts, by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors

AC9E8LE02 - share opinions about the language features, literary devices and text structures that contribute to the styles of literary texts

AC9E8LA03 - explain how texts are structured depending on their purpose and how language features vary, recognising that some texts are hybrids that combine different genres or elements of different genres

AC9E8LA01 - recognise how language shapes relationships and roles

AC9E8LE03 - explain how language and/or images in texts position readers to respond and form viewpoints

AC9E8LY03 - analyse and evaluate the ways that language features vary according to the purpose and audience of the text, and the ways that sources and quotations are used in a text

AC9E8LY05 - use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring, questioning and inferring to interpret and evaluate ideas in texts

WORKSHEET: TWO SCHOOLS COMPARISON

Name:

Date:

YOUR TASK

Emma has experienced two very different schools. Use evidence from the text to compare them and think about which environment would be the best fit for her.

COMPARISON TABLE

Comparison	Beachside High	St Jude's Ladies College
Physical appearance of the school		
School uniform		
Extracurricular facilities or opportunities <i>(Use clues from the story if they are not directly described.)</i>		
How the principal interacts with students		
Emma's friends and relationships		
What Emma would gain by attending this school		
What Emma would lose by attending this school		

DECISION TIME

If you were Emma, which school would you choose?

- Beachside High
 St Jude's Ladies College

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Use evidence from the text to explain your decision.

Reason 1:

Evidence from the text:

Reason 2:

Evidence from the text:

Reason 3:

Evidence from the text:

EXTENSION CHALLENGE

Imagine Emma writes a letter to a friend explaining her decision. In one paragraph, explain why she chose that school and how she feels about her future there.
