

Magabala Books • Teacher Notes

Wraith

Written by Shane and Alexandra Smithers

Teacher Notes prepared by Christina Wheeler

OVERVIEW

James can fly, though his landings need some work. However, that's the least of his problems when he crash lands into a city in the clouds. Soon James is drawn into a race against time to find the SAFFIRE, a new technology designed to save the city from the effects of climate change. Finding his way home seems impossible but with the help of Aureole, a young girl determined to save her city, James just might be able to fly away and help save the city in the process.

- Compelling sci-fi storyline engages young people to contemplate modern environmental issues
- Darkly humorous adventure set in an alternate world
- Fast-paced read
- Publicity will be sought in all relevant magazines, journals and newspapers

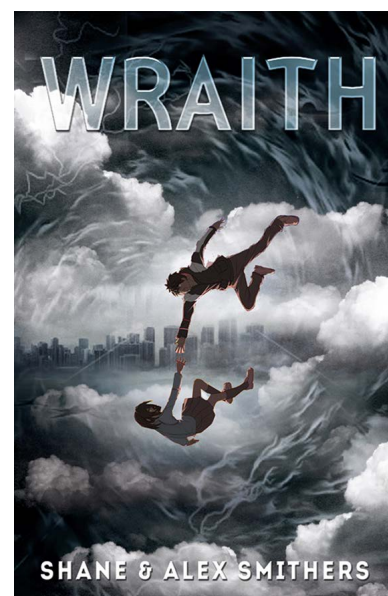
THEMES

- Trust
- Resilience
- Problem-Solving
- Climate Change
- Adventure
- Science Fiction
- Aboriginal Peoples – Social Life and Customs

AUDIENCE AND WRITING STYLE

Wraith is an action-packed Science Fiction novel that follows the adventures of James as he grapples with his newfound ability to fly. Highlighting the damaging effects of climate change, *Wraith* takes the audience on a journey to the cloud-based home of the Azuriens. Here, James meets Aureole, the feisty fifteen year-old daughter of Nebulosity's leader. When a device designed to absorb fossil fuel emissions falls into the wrong hands, James and Aureole secretly embark on a mission to retrieve it. In so doing, they quickly learn the virtues of trust, cooperation and problem-solving.

Incorporating important aspects of Aboriginal culture, *Wraith* will appeal to very competent middle and upper primary readers, and is also suited to Young Adolescent audiences. It is fast-paced and incorporates many space-age technologies that will engage and entice readers of various abilities.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Shane Smithers is a Darug man of the Burraberongal clan. He is a university lecturer, Aboriginal spokesperson and renowned Aboriginal artist. Shane has lectured in community development, cultural studies and communications at the University of Western Sydney, Indigenous Education at Macquarie University, and Cultural Perspectives at UWS College. He has had a number of exhibitions of his paintings and wooden artefacts. Shane enjoys lutherie (guitar making), painting, exploring Aboriginal places, motorbike riding and the bush.

Alexandra Smithers was a secondary school science teacher for over twenty years. She enjoys science, especially physics, motorbike riding, bushwalking, fitness and writing. Alex is currently working on a number of projects, including a murder mystery set in the 1950s.

LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

This book and the classroom activities provided are primarily relevant to the following areas of the Australian Curriculum:

Learning area	Year level
English	Years 4-10
History	Years 7; 10
Science	Years 7; 10

The appendix highlights relevant content descriptors and cross-curriculum priorities that relate to the text and classroom ideas provided.

CLASSROOM IDEAS

- The opening pages of *Wraith* are action-packed, introducing readers to best friends, James and Darren. What do we learn about these characters and their friendship in these pages?
- Why is the company that James' parents work for - Akwatronics - described as an 'obscure little company' (p5)? As you read, take note of any clues you get about the work his parents do. Why is this such a mystery?
- Darren invents a VPR – Variable Pressure Release unit – to help James with his newfound ability to fly. Design your own prototype of a VPR.
- Reread p9 in which James is flying. Using the description given, make a sketch of James' view over the suburbs.
- Investigate the principles of aeronautics. How is it that James can fly? What challenges does he face when flying?
- How do scientific understandings such as gravity play a role in James and his flying?
- We learn early that James and his dad are Darug men. Find out more about the Darug culture and heritage by viewing the short films at the following site: <http://www.indigenous.gov.au/news-and-media/stories/our-place-learning-about-aboriginal-culture-your-suburb>
- How do we know that James, his father and grandparents are proud of being Aboriginal? What evidence is there of this in the text?
- Why do you think James only tells Darren about his ability to fly, not his parents?
- In what ways is James like Superman? In what ways is he different? Show this comparison on a graphic organiser.
- Discuss James' comment that 'real adults aren't generally very open-minded' (p13).
- The authors use figurative language to describe various scenes. Analyse their use of such language, and the contribution it has on the text. Examples include:
 - Mountain Blue-gums were casting long shadows across the paddocks p11
 - James felt gravity reach out like a giant, invisible hand and wrench him from the air p11
 - The gentle burble of the V12 became a throaty roar p17
 - The BMW shot past the line of speeding police cars like falling dominoes p17
 - He had his hands folded in front of him, as if he were at a funeral viewing the deceased p27
 - Mrs Fox fussed over James like a... fox with a cub p34
 - Darren moped around the house like a tethered tiger p34



- I want you to be like a shadow in the night p43
- As big as a school bus, shaped liked an anvil at one end p46
- The blackness was pressing in, suffocating him p49
- He felt as if a thousand elephants had trampled him p50
- The scene was like a watercolour painting left out in the rain, colours smearing into one another, leaving no distinct beginning or end p61
- People walked past like hazy shadows and elongated blurs whizzed back and forth several metres above the ground p61
- It clung to him like a spider's web p67
- When the rusty wrought-iron gate swung back on its hinges, it sounded like fingernails down a blackboard p80
- The headstones... reminded Erebus of jagged, decaying teeth p80
- The moon slipped behind a cloud, and the graveyard plummeted into darkness p81
- The liquid felt like a warm gentle breeze in his mouth p101
- Thunder rumbled through the air, and far below rain fell in sheets of grey on a wild and stormy ocean p108
- The thin blue veins in Kawasaki's forehead throbbed visibly with every movement p157
- His normally silver hair was a fiery red and his eyes were bulging like giant billiard balls p157
- Suddenly, the beams began to narrow and multiply like a laser show on New Year's Eve p198
- It reminded James of a sardine trying to jostle a humpback whale p219
- The pungent smell of fish hung heavily in the stale, dank air p228
- Oil and grease clung like brown mucus to their fingers and clothes p232
- He could smell the fresh air even before he saw the ladder leading up. It felt like tiny tentacles, curling and probing at his nostrils, teasing his senses p239
- Her hair was limp and clinging to the sides of her face like some strange sea creature p299
- A cool breeze was tickling the grass p342
- Erebus' eyes ripped through Wilson like knives p366
- The sweet aroma of finely ground coffee hung in the warm air p458
- Why is James so excited that his father has offered for him to go to New Zealand? Why have the authors made this trip impossible for James to attend?
- *Wraith* is told from a range of viewpoints and multiple settings. Discuss this structure. How does it help to propel and vary the pace of the narrative?
- What is your opinion of Erebus's character? Why have the authors deliberately placed him with offsideers such as Collins and Wilson? How does the humour used in these scenes engage readers?
- Why have the authors included high-tech gadgets and expensive cars for Erebus? How does this help to add adventure and adrenalin to the text?
- Why is James' mother so selective in the attention she gives James? How does this make him feel? Why?
- What aspects of Aboriginal culture are incorporated into *Wraith*? Journal examples as you are reading.
- Throughout the text, imagery is used to describe various settings. Analyse the language features in the following passages. Examples include:
 - Nebulosity p45
 - Cemetery p79
 - Carnival p122-3
 - Island p167
 - Docks p219

Write a description of another setting using imagery similar to that used by Alex and Shane Smithers.



- In your own words, describe how James came to be trapped in Nebulosity.
- Create a list of characters in *Wraith* and the roles they play in the story.
- As you read, make predictions about characters such as Erebus, Dr Kawasaki and Cirro. After their true identities are revealed, discuss how the authors foreshadowed such character developments.
- Sketch a cross-section of a hopper, showing a detailed view of its dashboard and various functions.
- The hoppers have inertial dampening units built in so that seatbelts are not required. Investigate the principles of force and motion associated with inertia.
- Discuss how the authors have incorporated features of the science fiction genre into their novel. With a friend, create your own science fiction setting. Invent technologies that would help support your story.
- The inscription on the lid of the coffin contains a pangram – a sentence containing all 26 letters of the alphabet. With a friend, devise your own pangram.
- The Empyrean is concerned about James' mental health. Why is this concern included in the text?
- It is revealed that James is a hybrid between an Agrarien and an Azurien, possible because his Aboriginal genes are the oldest and purest of all humans. Discuss the historical and cultural context the authors have used in this part of the novel.
- Discuss the way in which the authors have included aspects of cloud science into the text, for instance, a rainbow serving as the entrance gates to Nebulosity and the names of many of the Azurien characters.
- What role does James' Gran play in *Wraith*?
- Why are Scarlet's instructions to Erebus delivered in such a cryptic way? How does this contribute to the text?
- James comments that calling the Main Azurien Laboratories 'MAL Laboratories' is an example of tautology. What is tautology? What are some other common examples of tautology (eg two twins)?
- Why, when James finally gets back to land, does he choose to sleep outside?
- Using the description of the island on p170, sketch the home of the Archipelagiens.
- Discuss Batak's comment that his people 'may be xenophobic, but when you earn their trust there's no stopping them' (p170). How does this reflect real-world attitudes some people feel towards foreigners? Why include this in *Wraith*?
- James teases Aureole for speaking like a robot and teaches her to use contractions. Why does he do this?
- Discuss James' comments that 'being Aboriginal isn't about skin colour. It's about heritage and community and identity and having a bond with our country' (p186). How does he explain the concept of country to Aureole?
- Decode the letter from Batik on p204. Try writing your own message to Cirro using the same code.
- In what ways is the Wraith the archetypical 'baddie'?
- What do you think is meant by the recurring phrase 'only the dead have seen the end of the war' (p296)? How does this tie different threads of the story together?
- How does Aureole's character change from the start of the text to the end? What instigates this change? Create a character profile of Aureole, showing her strengths and weaknesses. Why is it important that characters have weaknesses?
- Discuss the following realisation of Aureole's: 'If you are feeling miserable or depressed, it is much harder to accomplish even simple tasks' (p341). Write a reflection of a time in your life when this was the case.
- James' parents have been kidnapped by another species. Speculate on why they have been kidnapped.
- Why does James get frustrated when Aureole becomes overly bossy? How does he handle this?
- Why does James have to concentrate on his feelings in order to succeed? What are the authors saying to readers through James' realisation?
- In what ways does James show resilience and perseverance?
- Discuss the inscription at the front of the book: "To difference, Humanity would be incredibly boring without you." How is this message central to *Wraith*?
- As you read *Wraith*, keep a list of the specific terms used and what they mean. Examples include Atmospheric Sampling Unit, VPR, Agrarien, Azurien, ANGI, MAL, SAFFIRE, hopper, harmonising bracelet, thought-keying etc. Create a glossary that explains these terms.



- Imagine you are James or Aureole. Write a journal entry describing your experiences as you try to recover the SAFFIRE.
- What is the main message of *Wraith*?
- What do you predict will happen after the epilogue? Write the next chapter.
- Investigate the effect that climate change is having on rising temperatures and sea levels. Create a report to present your research.

APPENDIX - LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

Year	Curriculum Area
4	<p>English</p> <p>Literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss how authors and illustrators make stories exciting, moving and absorbing and hold readers' interest by using various techniques, for example character development and plot tension (ACELT1605) • Discuss literary experiences with others, sharing responses and expressing a point of view (ACELT1603)
5	<p>English</p> <p>Literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify aspects of literary texts that convey details or information about particular social, cultural and historical contexts (ACELT1608) • Create literary texts that experiment with structures, ideas and stylistic features of selected authors (ACELT1798)
6	<p>English</p> <p>Literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse and evaluate similarities and differences in texts on similar topics, themes or plots (ACELT1614) • Create literary texts that adapt or combine aspects of texts students have experienced in innovative ways (ACELT1618)
7	<p>English</p> <p>Literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and explore ideas and viewpoints about events, issues and characters represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1619) • Discuss aspects of texts, for example their aesthetic and social value, using relevant and appropriate metalanguage (ACELT1803) • Recognise and analyse the ways that characterisation, events and settings are combined in narratives, and discuss the purposes and appeal of different approaches (ACELT1622) <p>History</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of conserving the remains of the ancient past, including the heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACDSEH148) <p>Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change to an object's motion is caused by unbalanced forces, including Earth's gravitational attraction, acting on the object (ACSSU117 - Scootle)



<p>8</p>	<p>English</p> <p>Literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the ways that ideas and viewpoints in literary texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts may reflect or challenge the values of individuals and groups (ACELT1626) • Explore the interconnectedness of Country/Place, People, Identity and Culture in texts including those by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors (ACELT1806) • Recognise and explain differing viewpoints about the world, cultures, individual people and concerns represented in texts (ACELT1807)
<p>9</p>	<p>English</p> <p>Literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret and compare how representations of people and culture in literary texts are drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1633) • Analyse texts from familiar and unfamiliar contexts, and discuss and evaluate their content and the appeal of an individual author’s literary style (ACELT1636)
<p>10</p>	<p>English</p> <p>Literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare and evaluate a range of representations of individuals and groups in different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1639) • Evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in texts (ACELT1812) • Compare and evaluate how ‘voice’ as a literary device can be used in a range of different types of texts such as poetry to evoke particular emotional responses (ACELT1643) <p>History</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extension of settlement, including the effects of contact (intended and unintended) between European settlers in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACDSEH020) <p>Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global systems, including the carbon cycle, rely on interactions involving the biosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere and atmosphere (ACSSU189)
<p>Cross-Curriculum Priorities</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture; Sustainability</p>	

