



Adrift

PAUL GRIFFIN

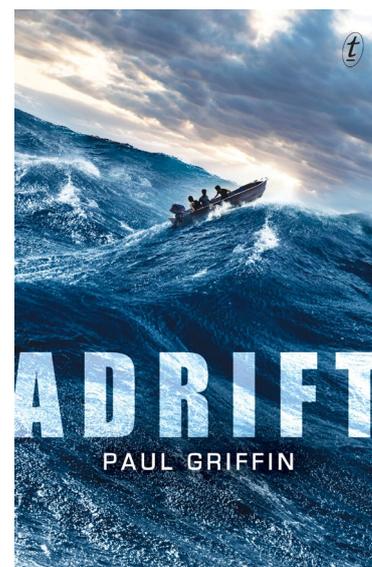
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TEXT'S TEACHING NOTES FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

- ▶ Text's teaching notes are designed for teachers to explore the novel in line with the *Australian Curriculum: English*.
- ▶ Questions are divided into stages: from pre-reading to post-reading and include suggested tasks for assessment.
- ▶ Refer to the legend below and the accompanying [Australian Curriculum: English Scope and Sequence reference chart](#) to decipher these codes.
- ▶ An ACARA coding system connects each task to the *Australian Curriculum: English*. It includes links to strands, modes, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.

STRANDS	LA – LANGUAGE LY – LITERACY
MODES	W – WRITING R – READING L – LISTENING S – SPEAKING
GENERAL CAPABILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LITERACY INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CAPABILITY INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING NUMERACY ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR
CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SUSTAINABILITY ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HISTORIES AND CULTURES ASIA AND AUSTRALIA'S ENGAGEMENT WITH ASIA

SYNOPSIS

'Five of us went out on the water that night. None of us came back whole, and not all of us came back.' (p.22)

While spending their summer working on Long Island, Matt and John meet three friends whose backgrounds could not appear to be more different. Driana, JoJo and Stef come from a world of wealth and privilege. After being invited to a party at Dri's Hamptons mansion, the boys find themselves adrift on a borrowed boat with three people they hardly know. They quickly discover that out here, adrift at sea, money and privilege don't matter. They also realise that everyone has secrets and sooner or later your past will catch up with you. As they count down the days waiting for rescue, the group struggle with their own ghosts. They must learn to survive not only the harsh environment but also each other. It is an experience that changes their lives.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Griffin lives in New York and has worked in a range of professions, including Emergency Medical Technician (Ambulance) and teacher. In recent years he has worked with at-risk teenagers. When he was younger, Paul found himself stranded for several hours on his Uncle's boat. While all ended well, the experience stayed with him and he has drawn on it for his new novel *Adrift*. His previous works include *Ten Mile River*, *The Orange House* and *Burning Blue*. Paul lives in Manhattan, New York, with his wife.



BEFORE READING

1. What skills would you need if you were lost at sea? Do some research to find out what mistakes people make and what important knowledge they need in order to improve their chance of survival. (ACELY1704) **R W LY**
2. Find a map of the area that the novel is set in. Create your own version of the map. As you read, add to the map and determine where the characters are in each part of the novel. You could do some research to consider currents, time and distance to ensure greater accuracy in your mapping. (ACELY1704) **R W LY**
3. Find other examples of human survival (at sea, in the mountains, in the desert) and make a list of the factors that contributed to this survival. Which do you believe you would be capable of? What surprises you? (ACELY1704) **R W LY**

WHILE READING

1. What indications are there that we do not know the whole story when we first meet Matt and John in the novel? (See p.22, for example) (ACELY1711) **R LY**
2. How does the description of Long Island in chapter one add a sense of foreboding to the novel? Which phrases or words add to this feeling? (See also p.22). (ACELA1797) **R LA**
3. What is implied in the early stages of the police investigation? What is this based on? (ACELA1523) **R LA**
4. 'That's what started the wild ride that remapped the course of my life.' (p.8) Create a timeline that 'maps' the key events in the novel as well as the changes in the characters. (ACELT1622) **R LT**
5. In what way is the idea of being 'adrift' both literal and metaphorical in this novel? (For example, how were the characters' lives drifting before they got on the boat?) (ACELT1637) **R LT**
6. What does the novel suggest about outsiders? (p.10) (ACELT1620) **R LT**
7. Why do you think the characters drift apart, especially at the end of the novel? (ACELT1620) **R LT**
8. What mistakes are made by the group? What are the consequences of those mistakes? (ACELT1771) **R LT**
9. What factors contribute to the outcome for each character? Are the characters responsible for this themselves or do others contribute? (ACELT1620) **R LT**
10. Choose one moment in the novel and put yourself in the character's shoes. What would you do differently and why? (ACELT1635) **R W LT**
11. Why do the stars become a focus during their time adrift? What is the significance of stars, especially for sailors? (p.27) (ACELT1637) **R**

12. Paul Griffin uses detail in the novel to make the reader feel uncomfortable. Which passages from the novel make you feel uncomfortable and why? For example, his detailed description of Stef's body as it decomposes is unpleasant to read (p.44) yet realistic. (ACELT1641) **R LT**
13. Why is time so important to the characters? How does the marking of time change throughout the novel? (p.31, 57) (ACELT1637) **R LT**
14. Their first sign of hope for land turns out to be rubbish that has been brought there by the current. In what way is it symbolic that the boat should bring them to the same place? (ACELA1560) **R LA**

AFTER READING

CHARACTER

1. How does Paul Griffin make some characters more likeable than others? Is our reaction to characters constant or does it change throughout the novel? For example, how do we feel about JoJo when Matt and John first meet on the beach and how do we feel about him? (ACELT1620) **R LT**
2. John is described by the other characters as being cold. Do you agree with this observation? What might make him 'cold'? (ACELT1620) **R LT**
3. Pair up the characters according to what they have in common, other than being stuck on the boat. See how many links you can create. (ACELT1621) **R LT**
4. Compare the way the world sees each character compared to how we see them as readers. For example, how are John and Matt depicted in police reports and how does this differ from what we see of them on the boat? (ACELT1620) **R LT**
5. Explain how each character is changed by the events on the water. Find at least two quotations for each character to illustrate that change. (ACELT1622) **R LT**
6. Make a list of words that could be used to describe or be associated with each of the key characters. Are there any changes evident in the words you choose as the novel progresses? If so, why? (ACELT1621) **R LT**

STYLE AND STRUCTURE

1. What is the effect of the subheadings, reports and different voices that are used in the novel at the start of chapters? For example, the first-person narrative of Matt, the coast guard logs and police reports. (ACELT1642) **R LT**
2. Why do you think Paul Griffin does not tell us everything about each character when we first meet them in the novel? (ACELA1553) **R LA**
3. How do we know that Matt survived the tragedy on the boat from early in the novel? Consider point of view and tense in your response. (ACELA1557) **R LA**



4. What difference might it have made had the story had been narrated by a different character? (ACELT1642) 📖 R LT

THEMES

Hope

- 'God is watching out for us.' (p.68) How does the characters' faith in their survival change over time? (ACELT1635) ⚙️ R LT
- 'He won't be hopeful anymore. He struggles with that.' (p.104) Why does Dri's dad struggle with hope? Which characters struggle with it the most? (ACELT1635) ⚙️ R LT
- Matt keeps telling the others that everything will be ok, but he knows it is a lie. Why doesn't he tell them the truth? (ACELT1807) ⚙️ ⚖️ R LT
- What is meant by false hope? Are there examples of false hope in the novel? (ACELT1627) 📖 R LT
- Even when there is hope, events can occur that destroy that hope. What happens in the novel that might have an effect on their sense of hope? (ACELT1622) ⚙️ R LT

Survival and Loss

- Dri describes the desert as '...beautiful. Beyond beautiful.' (p.62) but she also says that it was lonely. Describe the way that beautiful environments can become something different, such as lonely, threatening or frightening. (See also p.27). (ACELT1622) ⚙️ R LT
- Survival is as much about your mental state as it is about your physical state. Considering this perspective on survival, what does it tell us about the plight of the survivors? (ACELT1635) ⚙️ R LT
- What actions (right or wrong) do the characters take that contribute to their survival? (ACELT1635) ⚙️ ⚖️ 👤 R LT
- Some people will do more to save themselves than others will do. Explore this idea in the novel. Which character do you believe has the best survival instinct? For example, when JoJo seemed lose hope after the loss of Stef. (ACELT1627) ⚙️ ⚖️ 👤 R LT
- While much is lost on the boat, what other losses were experienced by the characters in the novel? (ACELT1619) ⚙️ R LT

Guilt and the Past

- Each character carries some level of guilt with them. Identify the source of this guilt and discuss whether the characters are justified in feeling that way. (ACELT1620) ⚙️ ⚖️ R LT
- 'Payments were going to have to be made, favours returned, accounts reckoned, sacrifices honoured, all the things John and I had managed to dodge until now.' (p.64) Explain what Matt means by this. What effects to events in the past have on decision you make later? (ACELT1627) ⚙️ ⚖️ R LT

- How is guilt personified on p.64? What is the effect of that personification? (ACELA1553) ⚙️ R LA
- Matt is followed by the ghost of Mr Costello. But the nature of that 'haunting' changes throughout the novel. (Consider pp.1, 71, 223.) How does it change and why? (ACELT1627) ⚙️ R LT
- Why does Matt say he felt like he was 'infecting' Dri by telling her about the shooting? (p.91) (ACELT1635) ⚙️ R LT
- How is Matt's guilt manifested in the novel? (For example, on p.71.) (ACELT1812) ⚙️ R LT

RESPONSE

- Matt says that he was 'in the wrong place at the wrong time'. (p.63) Is this true of other characters in the novel or is their predicament more deliberate? Explain your answer using evidence from the novel. For example: John chose to go with them on the boat. (ACELT1771) ⚙️ R W LT
- 'For some people, the universe provides. The rest of us scramble.' (p.45) While the characters may come from different backgrounds, that difference does not matter when it comes to their survival. Do you agree? (ACELT1633) ⚙️ R W LT
- Despite appearances on the outside, everyone has 'ghosts' that haunt them. In what way is this evident in the novel? (ACELT1627) ⚙️ ⚖️
- What are five good tips for someone who is lost at sea? Do some research into survival skills and create a manual for boat owners to keep on their boats. (ACELT1632) 📖 R W LT
- Guilt can be as great a barrier to our survival as anything else. Discuss using evidence from the novel. (ACELT1627) ⚙️ ⚖️ R W LT
- Each character carries a different feeling of responsibility for what happens to Stef and JoJo. What are their feelings based on? Are they justified? (ACELT1627) ⚙️ ⚖️ R W LT
- 'Five of us went out on the water that night. None of us came back whole, and not all of us came back.' (p.22) How are the characters changed by their experience? (ACELT1627) ⚙️ R W LT
- 'Tragedy brings people together.' (p.106) Is this true in *Adrift*? (ACELT1627) ⚙️ 👤 R W LT
- 'Even though the situation we were in was crazy and horrible, I couldn't help but feel awed. The water, the sky, the way Dri's eyes caught the twilight and turned green-gold...the colours were surreal, movie-like. The moon was coming up and the ocean looked like the desert, wave after wave of shifting silvery dunes.' (p.60) What role does the environment play in creating drama and reflecting mood in the novel? (ACELT1627) ⚙️ R W LT
- We cannot change the experiences we have had, instead we must learn from them. What lessons do the surviving characters learn from their experience? (ACELT1771) ⚙️ ⚖️ R W LT