

Teachers' Notes: Outback Ferals

**'Outback Ferals' (Lothian/Hachette) is a sequel to
'Antarctica's Frozen Chosen'
by Hazel Edwards**

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1. Curriculum Links:

Science: pandemic, feral animals, weather 'Build up'

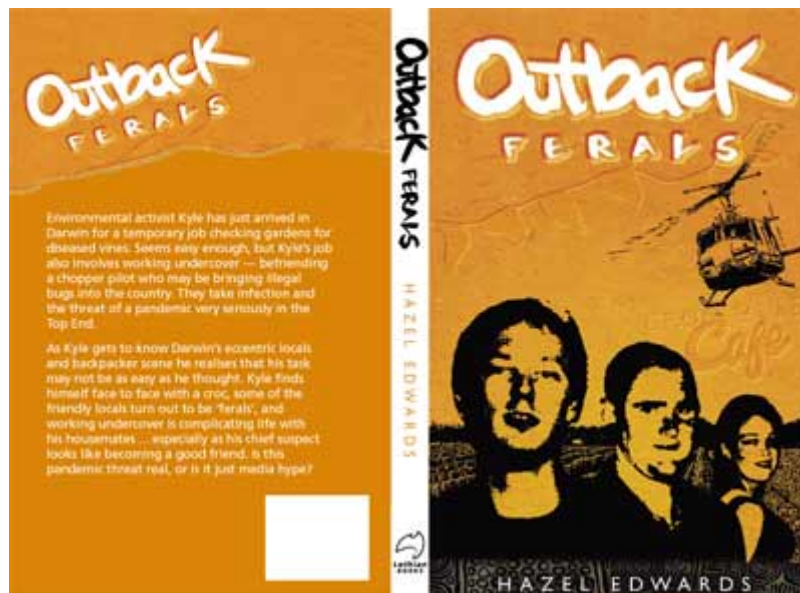
SOSE Outback culture, Mateship, workstyles, backpackers.

Music: CD

Design: problem solving, graphics, cover design. Indigenous art

Civics: legal responsibilities

Maths: Mapping. Distances. GPS Temperature. Night Markets, entrepreneurship



David Liston's 'Outback Ferals' final book cover

Pandemic: Covering 'Outback Ferals'

www.hazeledwards.com

published in Practically Primary June 2006.

about designing book covers

Ever wanted to design a book cover?

Few student graphic artist- illustrators get the chance to design a book cover for a book about to be published. Melbourne-based Lothian publishers were prepared to encourage young talent.

Melbourne author Hazel Edwards' 'Outback Ferals' novel is set in the Northern Territory, David Liston the graphic designer is from Sth Australia and the pandemic theme is international.

So how lucky was that?

Initially, Sth Aust TAFE graphics lecturer Katherine Bradfield requested work-experience for her students in designing book covers. Hazel responded to the initial request on PIO (Pass It On) an electronic children's author newsletter, for 'brief' opportunities to give graphics students real- life 'work experience'. She offered the 'brief' for her next book cover, but explained that it was only a cover practice and not a commission because she was not the publisher.

In the beginning, the students were just doing 'work experience' by designing a book cover, and using 'Outback Ferals' as the example. There was no promise of paid publication.

Three students (David Liston, Nathan Benger and Jason Wood) took up the challenge, and kept re-submitting their work three or four times after comments by the author and the publisher. Then preparation met opportunity!

Suddenly the book publication date was advanced to September 2006, partly because the 'pandemic' theme was so topical and a 'real' cover design was needed immediately.

So the three students had a chance for a commission.

Q. What was the 'Outback Ferals' brief?

- Currently the YA novel 'Outback Ferals' is contracted to Lothian publishers and scheduled for Sept 2006 release. It is a sequel to 'Antarctica's Frozen Chosen' (Lothian 2003), a recent radio serial.
- A YA (young adult) novel of 30,000 words, it is set in Darwin, Northern Territory and could have future filmic possibilities as real settings involving crocodiles, choppers, the Night Markets and the Beer Can Regatta have been used.
- Potential readers are males & females 12 -17 upwards.
- The cover needs to look active, adventurous and male orientated.

- It could be photographic or symbolic
- Other material could be designed such as: bookmarks including the cover, author's website and publisher website
- Activities for competitions for newspapers or magazines

Q. What are the author's expectations of the book cover designer?

- Read the book, before designing the cover, and as it is a sequel, also read the previous title and consider the appropriateness of the earlier cover.(I think the 'Antarctica's Frozen Chosen' cover looks a little too textbookish and not like an adventure but the green iceberg was used to tie in with the Jade character and the Jade berg.)
- I'd like a strong contrast such as orange/black silhouette, so that the cover would reproduce well in black and white newspaper reviews.
- Check my website (www.hazeledwards.com) for the cover of 'Antarctic Writer on ice' which symbolizes a 'window on Antarctica' This would be my favourite cover.
- Title needs to stand out well against background.
- Could be a wrap around cover, and you will need to design space for the blurb & bio for the back.(I can provide these)
- Author photo is not vital on cover but one can be provided.
- If you have time, check my website also for the teachers' notes and resources on how 'Antarctica's Frozen Chosen' was written. I'll attach a background article on how 'Outback Ferals' was written which may give ideas for a cover.

Q. What are the major ideas in the book?

- Authentic Northern Territory setting of outback Australia which is a last frontier. Active adventure chapters with crocodile chase and feral pig aerial survey by low flying chopper.
- Strong but sensitive male protagonist who deals with the moral issue of mateship and whether you should put the person or the issue first.
- Humour and fast pace of The Can Regatta, Night Markets and the Bottomless Boat race which are real tourist attractions
- Satirising Survivor Reality TV shows.
- Eco-issues of quarantine, bio- infection, possible pandemic and the role media plays in creating or diluting a THREAT.
- 'Rust' on vines is a real eco-issue and data attached at the end of the ms.
- Strong but varied male and female characters.
- Quirky characters like A.N.Zac the Long Grasser and Aunty May the aboriginal elder.
- Entrepreneurial young people across cultures.
- Indigenous art and whether this should be shared commercially.
- The role of the older, wiser woman as mentor helping indigenous youth.
- Backpackers' lifestyle
- Housemates in a tropical Top End climate.

- Importance of sport, especially football across cultures and the 'scratch' semi final for the under 14s where most weren't.

Q. What words (under 200) should be included on the back cover?

Answer;

'Outback Ferals' Back Cover Blurb (176 words)

Should you keep secrets from your housemates?

Is the threat of a Pandemic real or just media hype?

How do bugs, infection or ideas spread?

With a pandemic threatening, eco-sleuth Kyle is working undercover in the Northern Territory amongst the backpackers, ferals and friendly locals.

He's chased by a croc, surveys feral pigs from a chopper and almost acts in Survivor TV. Kyle faces the dilemma of not being able to disclose his 'real' job to his housemates Rem, Coco and Ng who invite him into their lives. He also has to deal with 'feral' people like A.N.Zac and his dog whom he meets in his temporary job checking rust-infested vines in the yards of difficult clients. And what else is Ng carrying on his extra chopper loads from the oil rig?

Beneath the outback fun, infection can spread fast. Bugs and ideas!

'Outback Ferals' [ISBN 0734409354](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0734409354) is a sequel to' Antarctica's Frozen Chosen' researched on Hazel Edwards' 2001 Antarctic expedition

Your Turn:

Now, why don't you design your own 'Outback Ferals' book cover for this brief. Include this information below for your back cover blurb but cut it from 170 to 100 words.

'Outback Ferals' outline

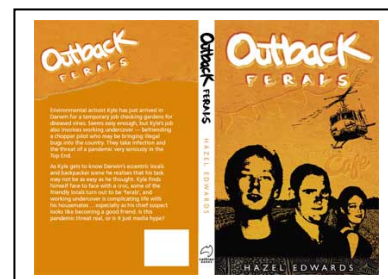
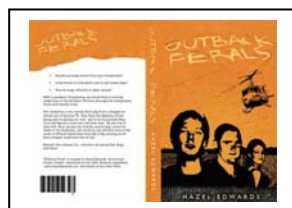
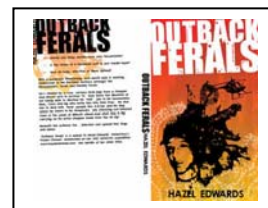
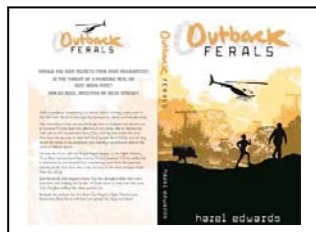
Cool Kyle is now hot!

University science student Kyle spent the previous summer tagging ele seals in the Antarctic polar ice and now he's getting more work experience, on a special scientific project in the Australian outback. Darwin is a last frontier township for the Northern Territory with 'long grassers' and backpackers as well as friendly locals.

But humid Darwin during the Build Up season ,offers more than a serious change in weather, there are special challenges with quirky mates ,a rust infection on vines and a possible pandemic spread by feral pigs. Rem's 'Outbackpackers Rap' is used in the Outback RealityT.V. program but Foot and Mouth disease is more than Kyle putting his foot in it, by talking when he shouldn't. What if the Top End of Australia had to be quarantined and shooters and choppers brought in to remove the feral animals? Kyle flies in a chopper, surveying ferals with his chief suspect. What if, Kyle's summer job as The Negotiator was bigger than he thought?

It is.#

Short-listed Covers for Outback Ferals.



W.I.P. Writing 'Outback Ferals'

2700 word article about writing 'Outback Ferals', a novel involving the threat of a pandemic

by Hazel Edwards
www.hazeledwards.com

Friday 13th February.

Although I don't believe in writers' block, and I'm not superstitious about 13 (it's my favourite number) , there's always a stage in writing a novel where I start messing around, because I can't decide how the plot will link the bits of scenes that I've already written.

I've reached that stage now with the 'Top End Negotiator', my work-in-progress, a young adult novel. And it's Friday 13th. I'm still on the first draft, and the plot doesn't hang together. I've concentrated on the house mate characters and the specific scenes, with eventual filming in mind and it's not working. There's a map of Darwin pinned near my desk to check the spelling of real landmarks and calculating distances and time.

I have two very dramatic chapters, one is a crocodile attack and another is a No Entry confrontation to a property, but they're not demonstrating Kyle's character development yet. They're just bits of isolated drama.

Last year I had to script my novel FAKE ID for television, and it was difficult to handle the time jumps and flashbacks and having to use voice overs for character introspection. So I swore that my next novel would be more active and sequential and 'filmic'. Characters would 'do' as well as 'be'.

Research

My expert 'boffin' has suggested a possible pandemic as a plot, I've interviewed practitioners , checked workstyle details and read about rust infestation of vines, foot and mouth and quarantine regulations in case of a **pandemic**, but I need stronger MOTIVATIONS for my characters.

I've visited the Territory twice and have a sense of the atmosphere, both climate and people because like Antarctica, the Top End climate is so influential and is almost a character in the way it affects the mood of others. My stories are usually character driven, but this time the cultural and geographic setting is significant.

Darwin is an enriched multi-racial society and I've indicated this indirectly in my characters. Cultural background creates reader expectation and some of

my characters challenge the stereotypes of the gambling Asian, the drunken Aboriginal 'Long Grassers' or the Japanese tourist and are sure to provoke critics.

Naming Rites

I try to choose names which are typical but which don't sound too similar. So it's possible that I may rename either Ng or Ned, (possibly as Rem) as it's foolish to have two short names starting with the same letter. Saori is a reasonably common Japanese name, and Coco is popular but I can also link it to the fashion designer Coco Channel as being part of that character's perception of herself as creative.

Working titles provided by authors are usually changed by the publisher's marketing department. 'The Negotiator' was my original working title, but I discarded it because it had no sense of place, and sounded too business orientated. I checked with my Darwin based son and he suggested Top End Negotiator of the Never Never or Tropical Negotiator. Never Never seems an apt name for this project today.

Interview Approach

As a solution to my Clayton's writer's block, I've decided to mock- interview each of my characters, allowing them to answer in ways which will develop their motives for their actions (some of which I haven't written yet.) I'm going to 'adopt' a character per day, and get into his/her head.

A working mother with no spare time once told me that she concentrated on family members, one at a time, for as many days as it took to get them 'up' and functioning. Then she moved onto the next one. I'm doing the same with my fictional family.

Generally I create a character dossier of the name, family, friends, physical looks, weaknesses and strengths, skills and problem which has to be solved for each major character. This takes weeks as I keep adding details. But since Kyle's dossier was created for the previous novel, I have to decide what to add or delete. Jade the Spanish exchange girlfriend who e-mailed him constantly in Antarctica, will need to be replaced by a local girl because their dialogue and relationship will matter in the plot development. It's too hard to orchestrate a cast of more than about five major characters, so each has to fulfil several roles and a remote girlfriend is superfluous. A local girl who contributes facts, experience or drama, is an asset to the action. This is where the Japanese-Aussie Saori will feature and maybe provide the link to historic Japanese pearl divers associated with the Territory.

Kyle is also known as Big K because he's tall, broad shouldered but a bit clumsy. Like Antarctica where he worked last summer, in the Top End, they shave their hair, for coolness, not boredom. So he has a bald dome, covered with a hat because of the Darwin sun. Physically he's already fixed in my mind, but I must drop hints for the new reader of how he looks and acts and why, since writing a sequel has special challenges of repetition without boredom.

Kyle is good with animals which is why he did eco-science but bad at chatting up girls. His Prof recommended him for this undercover job, passing as work experience on the vine 'rust' project but really working on a contamination threat, linking to deliberate eco-terrorism or a pandemic. Resourceful Kyle is chosen because he is the right age to pass in a shared house.

Characters need depth and so their strengths and weaknesses must be portrayed. Kyle is persistent and seeks to find out the truth, but he also admits his mistakes. He becomes interested in Darwin born Saori 19 year old Japanese-Aussie but feels awkward about being undercover and 'passing' as naïve when the house mates accept him at face value. Kyle has a vulnerable side, especially about girls, but is physically brave when the situation demands. Reluctantly he agrees to the undercover work because his parents believe he should pay his own way and he's broke after a summer volunteering in Antarctica.

Questions

These are the questions which I'll pose (and answer) for each character, once the dossier of physical attributes is completed.

- What is your significance in the story at the beginning? Does this change within the story?
- What is your most crucial scene? Why is this so?
- What are your feelings towards your major antagonist?
- What is the major problem that you have had to face internally? Externally?
- To what extent do you reach a satisfactory emotional solution? For you? For the reader?
- Why should the reader care what happens to you?

I ask Kyle. What is your significance in the story at the beginning?

'I'm the newcomer, who reacts to Territorian workstyle and laidback attitudes like not even using a watch. Facts turn me on, especially about the natural world and working outside. That's why I like the house-to-house work of checking on vines as the Negotiator. I'm fairly analytical and although I'm scared in the crocodile incident, I keep trying even if it seems hopeless.

My undercover job is to check on house-mate Ng who has a large flow of money, and find out where this comes from as well as whether he has been bringing in cargoes which may be infected.

What is your most crucial scene? Why is this so?

Escaping the crocodile attack and also travelling with Ng in the chopper during the aerial survey of the ferals makes me act, rather than hang back. But my most significant scene is when I confront Ng, when we're lifting weights in the gym under the house, and reply to his question of why I'm really checking him out.

My view of him changes during the story and I have qualms about whether I'm betraying a mate.

What is the major problem faced?

Because I'm big, at first people think I have the answers. Inside, I'm quiet, but I will speak out occasionally if it matters, even if I do look like an idiot or put my foot in it. I like to find out the truth, but then I find that people's versions vary. And it's not like science which has a yes/no result.'

Ng

Initially, Ng was to be the confrontationalist character whom Kyle had to face. Not a 'baddie' so much as an enigma.

Ng (20) is one of the house-mates who works on an off coast oil rig and is away often. Four weeks on and four off. His time on the rig is so structured all he does is work. He makes big money working on the rig, but he's also likes the risk of gambling on unlikely businesses like Coco's Rogue Vogue and Rem's CD when he's home. Ng is an obsessive-compulsive and for a while, the passion was serious fitness and extreme weight lifting. Now he's become a 'courier chopper pilot' of unknown cargoes which may be from infected areas to pay a few debts.

He's embarrassed that Asians are stereotyped as gamblers because his Grandmother was Chinese and like Coco he hates being type cast.

Ng, what is your significance in the story at the beginning? Does this change within the story?

I'm the one who's blamed for things which aren't my fault. I think Kyle is naïve and a bit of a fool. Technically I know I'm a good chopper pilot because I take care of all the details. Coco calls me a neat freak.

What is your most crucial scene? Why is this so?

When I think Kyle is accusing me of carrying drugs. I would never do that.

What is the major problem that you have had to face internally? Externally?

How to diversify and become 'moderate' instead of totally single minded, especially if I want to get Coco back.

Why should the reader care what happens to you?

I've got a big dose of the risk gene, and I like physical challenges like low flying with the chopper doing aerial surveys of feral pigs. I've helped Coco and Rem with money for their businesses, because they're my housemates (and tenants, because I own the share house) and because I like taking the risk of setting up unlikely businesses

I come back at the end to shake Kyle's hand even though he was living undercover in my house checking on whether I was carrying contaminated cargoes, and he helped make me a scapegoat in the media.

Coco: (19) represents creativity and is a singer-song writer or a songbird which is Ng's affectionate name for her. Part Aboriginal features, slim, attractive, eccentric jewellery with distinctive nails painted in wavy desert map patterns, means everybody notices Coco.

Coco was born to a white woman and an aboriginal man, and adopted at birth by a non Aboriginal family interstate. Gave herself the name of Coco which links in her mind to French fashion designer Coco Chanel and creativity.

A hard worker who is trying to confront the handouts image, Coco has started a small Rogue Vogue business at the Night Markets selling eco jewellery, eco cosmetics, handbags etc which have desert map decorations...link to aboriginal Aunty May who taught her the map reading and who needs help with computer skills to apply for a grant for social work for local kids' footy team?

Initially involved with Ng who backs her financially, now her aboriginal development grant has stopped but she's worried where the money has come from.

Coco:

In primary school, I was the only indigenous student but I made my first indigenous friends in high school. My adoptive parents, whom I'm still close to, encouraged me to rediscover my aboriginal past.

My ties are with old Darwinian families...one grandmother is the celebrated Aunty May

'That link between the Western way and the Aboriginal works well and I'm using it in my designs based on maps. . I'm telling my stories, learning old songs and I'm helping people from remote communities write modern songs about their country. I'm writing music for the radio audio play on community radio station

What is the major problem that you have had to face?

Because I'm dark skinned with some aboriginal ancestry, I'm fed up with being type cast as a lazy Abo.

Why should the reader care what happens to you?

Because I'm a trier. And a bit zany.

The other novel characters are:

Ned (later named Rem) is a larrikin stand up comic and apprentice chef at Croc Bites. Infectiously enthusiastic about creating N.T. Etiquette placemats to sell to tourist or his CD of 'Outbacker' songs which are so popular with the backpackers who've picked their way around Australia.

Aunty May aboriginal elder and mentor to Coco. One of an old Darwinian family, she becomes a teachers' aide at a primary school as a way of influencing youth through storytelling and junior football teams.

Saori is a stunningly beautiful Japanese-Aussie student who works at the Night Markets with Coco and translates for tourists as well as being a nail technician with indigenous patterns.. Fairly self centred and from a wealthy pearling family. Tends to make put down remarks

Jamie Works as a negotiator with Kyle on the rust-infection project. Skilful footballer and Aunty May chooses him to volunteer his footy skills for the aboriginal outback team she's sponsoring. Needs help to put in a grant application

A.N.Zac (40s) An Ex Long Grasser, 'nutter' and difficult 'client' who refuses access to his property and who typifies the 'negative' attitude.

Chippie (19), an apprentice carpenter is a 'bushie' outback girl who can put up a fence, mend a gate, ride a horse and is a good worker around her family's bush block. She has very strong, wide spanned hands, squat muscular legs, likes a beer and enjoys playing mixed sport hockey. Good with animals, she's resourceful with excellent bushcraft and can't understand why anyone would want to work in an office. Fascinated by Kyle's experience in Antarctica, and thinks of the expanses of ice as being comparable to the desert

I've been working consistently on the novel, inserting more 'action' in scenes such as the beer can regatta and the chopper survey and 'tweaking' to insert one liners which point up the characters more subtly.

I tend to read through early in the day when I'm clear headed to check the logic of the plot and to pick up on incidents which need to be resolved or mentioned again e.g. A.N. Zac's dog and why he has MAY tattooed.

Getting the time sequence is important too. After the crocodile attack, realistically Kyle would have been in Intensive Care longer, so I reduced his injuries. I need to check on the weather sequence to make sure it's correct for the events and months when these are held.

I'm still concerned that it is 'fact' laden, or suffering from researchitis so I put in more characterisation and humour such as the scratch football match.

It's now May and I've been working consistently on the novel and want to document the changes. I keep a running sheet of inconsistencies to fix...

1. Changed Ned's name. It was too similar to Ng, so I decided to call him Rem, short for Rembrandt. Trouble was when I did a find-and-replace, there were lots of other words in the ms which ended in ned which now had Rem on the end. Fixed these by hand.
2. Plot needed a twist at the end. I decided that Ng as a chopper courier of suspect cargoes was being made a media scapegoat to attract attention to a possible pandemic and place pressure on the government to increase the money the government was prepared to budget for Threat risk management just as the tenders were being submitted. He was innocent.
3. A final scene where Kyle and Ng confront each other is essential for the orchestration of the plot. I'm going to keep it short and suggest that much more has gone underneath and that there's mutual respect.

Readers often ask if a character takes over. I've become very fond of Ng because he's so single minded. And that's a worry as Kyle is the protagonist.

Now I've checked the timeframe of the story, but the final title is always a challenge. 'Outback Ferals' is the choice, but it may change.

Hazel Edwards May 26th 2004.

David's Pandemic Talent:

Young Graphic Artist Designs "Outback Ferals' Cover"

Pedals Magazine June 2006 :

Many outback students are aware of ferals but the cover of 'Outback Ferals' is a first!

Designed by a young South Australian graphic artist David Liston , it is his FIRST professional book cover.

The novel setting is the Northern Territory and 'Outback Ferals' is a sequel written by Melbourne based author Hazel Edwards. The earlier novel 'Antarctica's Frozen Chosen' with eco-sleuth Kyle was researched on an Antarctic expedition.

Few student graphic artist- illustrators get the chance to design a book cover for a book about to be published. Melbourne-based Lothian (Hachette) publishers were prepared to encourage young talent.

Initially, Sth Aust TAFE graphics lecturer Katherine Bradfield requested work-experience for her students in designing book covers. Hazel responded to the request on PIO (Pass It On) an electronic children's author newsletter, for 'brief' opportunities to give graphics students real- life 'work experience'. She offered the 'brief' for her next book cover, but explained that it was only a cover practice and not a commission because she was not the publisher. There was no promise of paid publication.

Three students (David Liston, Nathan Bengner and Jason Wood) took up the challenge, and kept re-submitting their work three or four times after comments by the author and the publisher. Then preparation met opportunity!

Publication was advanced to September 2006, partly because the 'pandemic' theme was so topical. David's cover was commissioned.

Young Book Designer's Background:

David Liston grew up in a small coastal community called Victor Harbor 80km south of Adelaide. As a child he lived on 80 acres of farm land which backed on to his grandfather's property, which was used to farm Hereford cattle. He attended Victor Harbor primary and high schools finishing year 12 in 1998. David then took a year off to pursue his passion for surfing before starting an apprenticeship as a sign writer. Five years later, technology changed the industry which left David wondering where his true passion lay. After talking to people in the design industry they recommended studying Graphic Design as graphics had always been an interest for him. This led to him living full time in Adelaide and studying Graphic Design at Croydon TAFE. As a child David remembers going camping whether at home or in more remote

areas such as Coonalpon or Broken Hill. He thinks sub-consciously this background has influenced his design in general, although he has also designed according to the brief and target audience.

Q. What was the brief?

A brief is a 'brief' outline of what the publisher and or author want to 'show' on the cover, and why. The marketing department has a big say in the cover. This was part of the brief given to David.

A YA (young adult) novel of 30,000 words, it is set in Darwin and could have filmic possibilities as real settings involving crocodiles, choppers, and the Beer Can Regatta have been used. Potential readers are males& females 12 -17 Needs to look active, adventurous and male orientated. Could be photographic or symbolic.

Q. What are the author's expectations of the designer?

Hazel asked that the designers read both books (since this is a sequel) and she favoured a strong contrast such as orange/black silhouette, for easy reproduction in newspaper reviews.

To help, she summarised what she considered the major ideas in the book: These included the pandemic of ideas and disease, eco-issues of quarantine and the role media plays in creating or diluting a THREAT

Your Turn:

Design your own 'Outback Ferals' book cover from this brief.

'Outback Ferals' ISBN 0734409354 at \$17.95 RRP. released September 2006 includes the commissioned cover designed by David Liston

Directing Outback Ferals

Imagine you are a director. This is the way in which a cast could be described for a film based on the novel and was requested of the author by a director.

Choose a scene of about a page) from the novel which you can perform for the classroom. The benefit is an opportunity to read for a purpose and perform in public. You may decide to include a Narrator to introduce and put the scene in context

e.g. This scene is taken from the novel Outback Ferals” and is important within the story because.....

Choose:

A complete scene with a definite finish

Dialogue

2-3 characters

Maybe SFX (sound effects) and costumes or props but keep to minimum.

...creating a scene

Possible scenes from ‘Outback Ferals’ might include:

Kyle meeting Coco.

The Night Markets

Scratch Football Match

Can Regatta

- Which do you consider to be significant scenes from Outback Ferals? Why? What do they reveal of the characters?
- Where would you film these? Locally?
- If you were director, which issues would you stress in the film? Why? How?
- What size budget will you need for your film?
- Now convince investors to back your film!