

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF PAPER PLANES AND THE DRY



MIA
WASIKOWSKA

RADHA
MITCHELL

AND
ERIC
BANA

AND INTRODUCING
ILSA
FOGG

BLUEBACK

BASED ON THE BELOVED BOOK
BY TIM WINTON



AUSTRALIAN TEACHERS OF MEDIA

Writer Dr Katrina Raynor

<https://theeducationshop.com.au>

<https://metromagazine.com.au>

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**STUDY
GUIDE
USA**



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*We come from water.
We belong to it.*
– Dora, *Blueback* by Tim Winton

*The ocean is a supreme
metaphor for change.
I expect the unexpected but
am never fully prepared.*
– *Land's Edge: A Coastal
Memoir* by Tim Winton

Film Synopsis

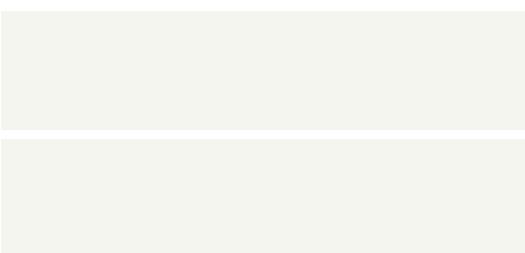
Adapted from the much-loved book by Tim Winton, Blueback tells the story of marine biologist, Professor Abby Jackson. When we first meet her, Abby is investigating a coral reef bleaching event. Compelled by her mother's illness to return to her remote beach home, Abby tends to her mother and takes the time and space to reflect on her life and relationships, the environment and the experiences that have shaped her. She is defined by her sense of wonder in the ocean and her commitment to its protection. An enormous fish, a western blue groper (Blueback) is at the heart of their patch of coastline that they want to protect.

The film plays out across three time frames: Abby at eight, at fifteen, and as an adult. Through dexterous editing and storytelling, the layers of Abby's identity are stripped back so that we come to see the girl in the woman, and how she has been transfigured by love for her inspirational mother. Blueback is distinguished by exquisite underwater cinematography, which invites us to enter with Abby into a mysterious and beautiful world, and explores what is at stake as we confront the challenges of climate change.

Ilsa Fogg as Teen Abby and Pedrea Jackson as Teen Briggs

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Blueback for Educators

Blueback provides rich material to explore Sustainability, Marine Studies, Geography, English and Film. Educators are encouraged to use this guide in a flexible and strategic way, picking and choosing activities that are relevant to their teaching and learning outcomes.

Discussion points & activities

*Throughout this study guide you will find statements identified as **Inquiry**. Depending on your cohort, these inquiry ideas could also be used as oral discussion starters; debate topics; or as the basis for extended research projects. They are deliberately open-ended. Feel free to adapt according to your requirements.*

THEMES

Childhood, family, parent-child relationships, community, identity, the environment, climate crisis, balancing development with protecting the environment, sustainability, place, belonging, environmental activism, threats to ecosystems, principles and values, the ocean and its wildlife.

Character studies

ABBY JACKSON

Choose six adjectives that you think best describe Abby. Swap them with a partner and compare your lists. As a whole class, compile a master list of the words most typically chosen to describe her.

What are Abby's strengths and weaknesses? Consider with reference to her at age eight, age fifteen and as an adult.

Create a motto that represents Abby and her values.

Do you relate to or identify with Abby? Why/why not? In what ways?

Draw up a compare and contrast chart where students can examine the similarities and differences between themselves and Abby.

Speculate on what Abby's life might be like in thirty years.

How important is Abby's connection to place? In what ways does the time and place you live in inform your identity?

Discuss the significance of Abby inheriting Mad Macka's boat. In what ways is she the rightful owner?

Ariel Donoghue
as Young Abby





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* Childhood

In the film, we see three different versions of Abby: eight-year-old Abby, fifteen-year-old Abby and adult Abby. In what ways does Abby change as she grows up? In what ways does she stay the same?

What sort of childhood does Abby have? How does it compare to your childhood? Would you swap?

What qualities, values and guiding principles does Abby learn as a child that inform the kind of adult she becomes?

L-R: Ilsa Fogg as Teen Abby; Mia Wasikowska as Abby



* Dive for the ring: Testing limits

Abby's childhood is full of risk and challenge; she has freedom and scope to develop self-reliance, resourcefulness and independence. Her childhood establishes the foundation for the strength and resilience she needs in adulthood. Discuss the birthday scene where Dora makes eight-year-old Abby to dive for the ring. Have you experienced anything comparable? What was Dora's motivation here? How might this have played out differently? In the scene directly after this, Abby is shown steering the motor boat, her face beaming with pride in her newly discovered abilities. But what could happen if a parent overestimated their child's abilities? What if Abby had not been able to recover the ring? If she had failed at this first solo dive? How could Dora be so sure it would be a triumphant experience to boost Abby's confidence and sense of mastery?

* Writing task: The year that changed me

Abby's story is told across three different time periods, each of which is shaped by a pivotal experience for her (for example, as a child, meeting Blueback for the first time; as an adult, her mother's illness). Give students the writing prompt: **The Year That Changed Me**. Have them brainstorm a list of key moments, events and relationships in their lives so far. They then select one period and write about its significance in how they understand their identity, their place in the world, their values, direction, family, etc. Encourage students to think more broadly than the obviously dramatic events. Something that might appear quite small to others may have had a profound impact on them and could be worth investigating.

* When things fall apart ...

Dora's illness precipitates a crisis for Abby, a re-examination of where she has come from and where she is going, what she values and what she intends to do with her life. With Dora slipping away, Abby must confront the ways in which her mother has been a beacon and a guide for her. She says, 'I'm not sure – about anything'.

Discuss with students how the experiences of illness, loss and vulnerability illuminate to Abby what truly matters to her.



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Complete **Table 1** in relation to the ways that Radha Mitchell's performance captures Dora's qualities.

▶ "Jump to Table 1" on page 6

Dora tells Abby, 'Time is all we have'. What do you think she means by this?

In the book, Dora says, 'This land is a kind of friend to me'. Explore this comment. Have students ever felt something similar?

INQUIRY

In what ways does Dora embody aspects of the archetypal mother?

In what ways does Dora challenge our conceptions of what it is to be a mother?

DORA JACKSON

She looked like the land and sea made her.
 – Excerpts from the book *Blueback* by Tim Winton

She learnt by staying put, by watching and listening.
 – Excerpts from the book *Blueback* by Tim Winton

Choose six adjectives that you think best describe Dora. Swap them with a partner and compare your lists. As a whole class, compile a master list of the words most typically chosen to describe her. Consider taking this activity further by using a word cloud generator.

What are Dora's strengths and weaknesses?

Merv, the bus driver, says the Jacksons are 'sly', and that Dora is 'secretive'. What do you think he means by this?

In the book Dora is described as:

- 'stubborn as a tree and just as strong'
- 'a scarred old seal'
- 'quiet and tough and sun streaked'
- 'respected'

From top: Liz Alexander as Older Dora; Ariel Donoghue as Young Abby and Radha Mitchell as Dora; Radha Mitchell as Dora



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TABLE 1
YOU CAN
COMPLETE
THIS PAGE IN
ACROBAT

YOUR NAME

<i>Character Trait</i>	<i>Scenes/Quotes that illustrate this trait</i>
Stubborn	
Tough	
Quiet	
Respected	
Courageous	
Others	



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From top: Ilsa Fogg as Teen Abby and Radha Mitchell as Dora; Clarence Ryan as Briggs; Eddie Baroo as Merv; Eric Bana as Mad Macka

MOTHER, DAUGHTER & THE SEA BETWEEN THEM

Use a Venn diagram to illustrate how Dora and Abby are similar and different. What personal qualities of Abby's can you trace back to Dora? Have students consider this for themselves in relation to their own parents, exploring concepts such as legacy, impact, generational continuity and conflict.

Describe the relationship between Dora and Abby, using specific moments from the film to support your observations. Touch on at least one moment from each of the three distinct time periods.

How does Dora feel about Abby going away to school? Why does she feel this way? Why is it important to Abby?

Do you think the relationship between Dora and Abby would have developed differently if Abby's father had lived? What might Abby's life have been like if she had lost her mother, not her father?

Discuss the scene in which Dora accuses Abby of cowardice over the bay dredging protest. At the end of this moment of conflict, they both apologise. Who did you feel sympathy for? Was one person in the wrong?

INQUIRY

Dora's says, 'We come from water. We belong to it.' If we reflect on this, what does this statement say about our place and role in our environment?

.....

THE MEN OF LONGBOAT BAY

Complete **Table 2** that summarises the different men of Longboat Bay. Once completed, discuss as a class the ways these men are similar and different, and their role in the film.

▶ "Jump to Table 2" on page 8



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TABLE 2
YOU CAN
COMPLETE
THIS PAGE IN
ACROBAT

YOUR NAME

<i>Character</i>	<i>Traits</i>	<i>Scenes/quotes</i>
Merv		
Mad Macka		
Costello		
Gitundu		
Briggs		
Mad Macka's son		



Setting: On the beach and all at sea



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This place is kind of a friend to me.

– Abel Jackson, *Blueback* by Tim Winton

Those men didn't understand that a place isn't just a property.

– Abel Jackson, *Blueback* by Tim Winton

Conduct a whole class brainstorm on words students associate with the sea. Consider taking this activity further by using a word cloud generator.

Ask students to bring in a photo of the ocean that means something to them. Present to the class and display throughout the unit as a visual reference.

Make a list of the dangers of the sea. Consider taking this activity further by using a word cloud generator.

Robbers Head is a dramatic name for a dramatic location, the deepest part of the bay and home to Blueback. It is a place of danger and wonder. Dora warns Abby it is full of caves and crevasses. It is the setting for key moments in the narrative. Have students compile a list of the events that take place here.

Abby and Dora are at home in the sea. Have students write about and illustrate a place that is special to them. Where do you experience a sense of belonging? How can place shape our values and identities? Present to the class or share in small groups.

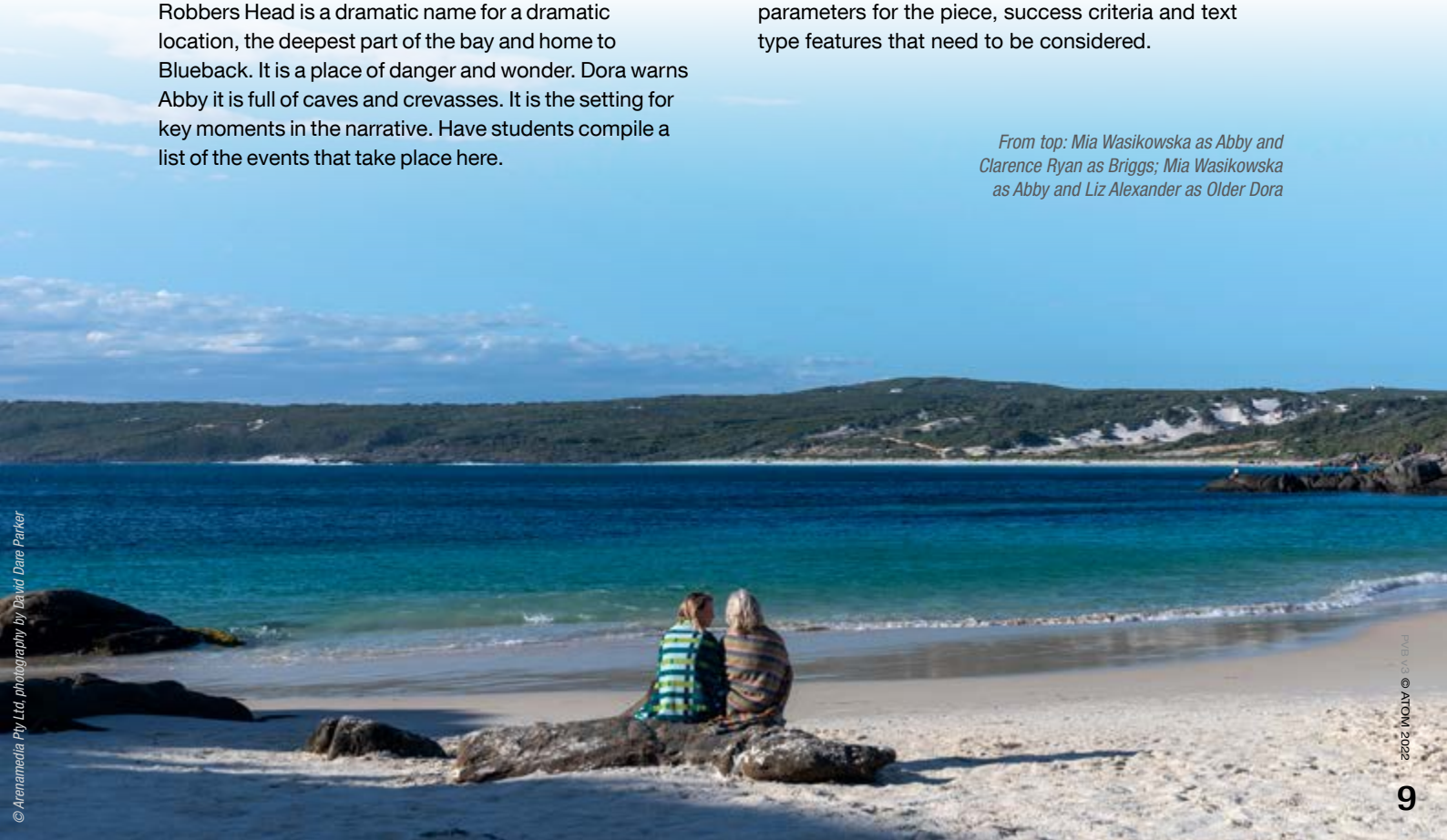
INQUIRY

'In effect, *Blueback* has two settings: one above, one below the water.' Discuss.

WRITING TASK: THE BEACH

Students write an account of a trip to the beach. Text type options: recount or narrative. Discuss parameters for the piece, success criteria and text type features that need to be considered.

From top: Mia Wasikowska as Abby and Clarence Ryan as Briggs; Mia Wasikowska as Abby and Liz Alexander as Older Dora



Choosing to make a difference

We have been taking from the sea and the land for so long, it's time for us to give something back.

– Tim Winton interviewed by Murray Waldren for *The Australian*, 1997

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READING THE SIGNS

Compile a list of all the references that are made to environmental degradation and stress in the film. Abby says they are signs in a puzzle: they fit together and demand us to take note. (For example, Mad Macka mentions to Dora that the sea temperature has risen by one and a half degrees; Professor Abby's work is concerned with investigating coral bleaching; sardines have died; a dead leopard seal washed up on shore; the salmon haven't arrived according to their usual schedule ...).

From top: Pedrea Jackson as Teen Briggs; Ilsa Fogg as Teen Abby; Radha Mitchell as Dora



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YOUNG ACTIVISTS, IN ALL WAYS

Students can reflect on all of the ways they can have a positive impact on environmental issues. Expand the notion of activism and encourage students to consider how every action makes a difference: the choices and decisions we make on a daily basis may be as vital to the outcome as marching in the street with a placard.

Students make individual lists identifying all of their routine behaviours that could be classified as sustainable. In pairs, share and discuss their lists. Students then write a commitment statement outlining one new measure they can adopt in the next month. These statements could be decorated and displayed in the classroom for inspiration and motivation. Set a date for a month's time to review and reflect on whether students met their goals. How challenging was it? What were the obstacles and difficulties? If you didn't meet your goal, can you identify why it wasn't achievable? Can you modify it in some way? This empowering and practical activity has real world application and context and could become an ongoing monthly practice if students are engaged and committed.

At the end of the film Abby resolves, 'I'm going to start right here, take a good close look at what we're fighting for'. In what ways might this be excellent advice for anyone committed to protecting the environment?

Working in small groups, students are to select a current issue (environmental, social, justice, other) and plan/script a ten-fifteen minute podcast that presents your point of view and promotes ideas of activism that can engender change on this issue. Students may consider adopting a persona (someone directly involved in the issue), and should ensure their discussion is well-researched and balanced in its exploration. Record completed scripts and share/listen to them as a class.



WATERCOLOURS

Abby's paintings are at once detailed, scientifically accurate and full of great beauty and magic. Discuss Abby's art works and how they function in the story. Consider for example:

- they feature in the appeal to council to establish a marine reserve;
- they are prized and valued mementoes in Dora's world;
- they represent Abby's longstanding commitment to and fascination with the creatures of the ocean;
- they visualise an appeal to the audience about why the fight to protect our environment matters.

Provide students with time and materials to create their own ocean themed artwork.



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INQUIRY

'Blueback is ultimately a film about the climate crisis.' Discuss.

'The film takes a swipe at human greed.' Discuss.

'The Anthropocene amounts to a profound failure to value the natural world and to acknowledge our own dependence on it.' Discuss.

COMMITMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENT

In small groups, students design and create protest posters for climate action, to be exhibited around the school and presented at Assembly. Consider the audience, language, imagery and an appropriate call to action.

Devise a list of five key points or principles that could enhance our harmony with nature and promote respect and appreciation. Create a Code of Conduct for how humans can interact sustainably with the sea. Investigate the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/oceans>

BE PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER

Investigate the petitions on [Change.org](https://www.change.org). Are there other campaigns for protecting the ocean that young people can be part of?



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From top: Ilisa Fogg as Teen Abby; Ariel Donoghue as Young Abby; Ilisa Fogg as Teen Abby; Clarence Ryan as Briggs



SUSTAINABLE OCEAN PRACTICES

Give students time to investigate the rules around fishing and harvesting abalone in their state. Search for fishing rules and regulations in your state. Why is overfishing an issue? What sorts of penalties do people face if they do not abide by the laws? How are the laws enforced? How often are people prosecuted?

What does Dora tell young Abby the rule is for taking abalone?

How does the film contrast sustainable fishing practices with fishing that causes damage and destruction? Consider using SWAT (Symbolic, Written, Audio, Technical) Codes and Conventions to explore this.

Discuss the differences between recreational and commercial fishing. Create an outline of the key principles for sustainable fishing and a statement explaining its importance. Find out more through the Australian Marine Conservation Society website, <https://www.marineconservation.org.au/fisheries/>

RESEARCH OR CREATE: WHAT'S AT STAKE?

In small groups, students pick a recent controversy in which developers were at odds with the environment (consider preparing a list of local examples for the students to choose from). Conduct research and report back to the class. This research could also form the basis for a creative response.

- Students could create a visual representation of the natural environment and the threat posed. This could take the form of a diorama or poster.
- Students could write a speech for an activist to deliver at a rally on this issue.
- Students could highlight the impact on a threatened species and create a performance piece for the animal to plead for its habitat.



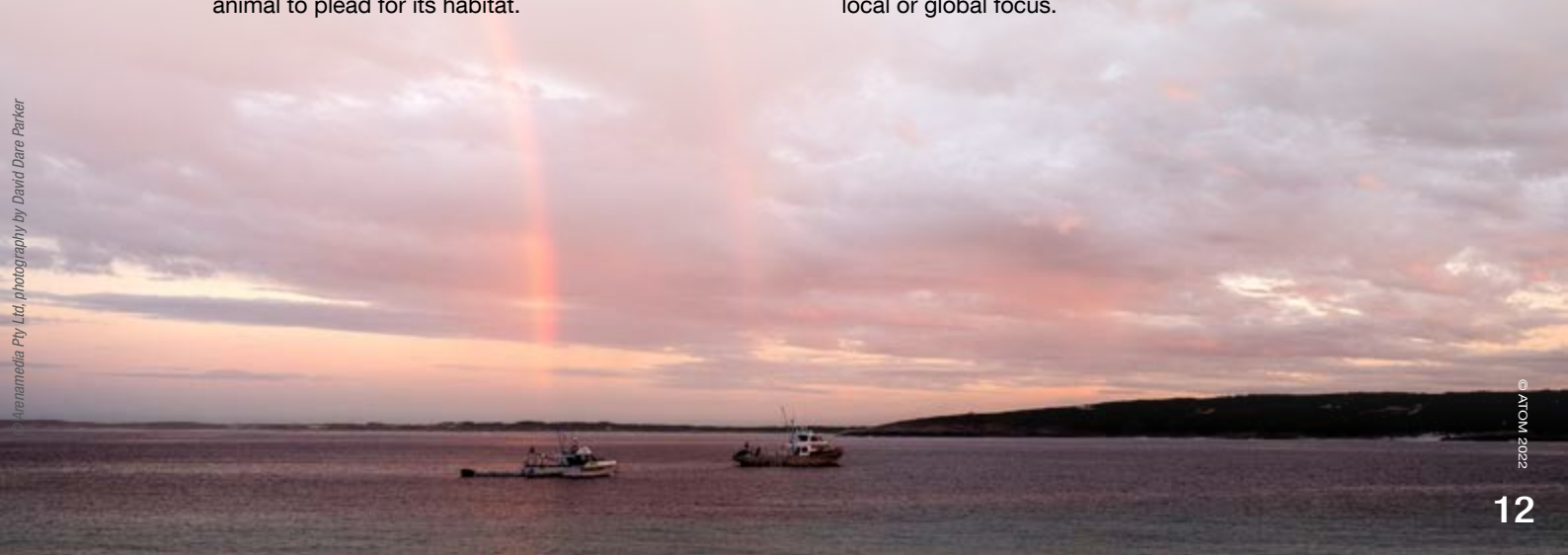
PROTECTING BLUEBACK'S BACKYARD

A marine reserve for the community of Longboat Bay was Dora's legacy. Why would this have been important to Dora, Abby, the community and the marine biodiversity of the area?

What roles can communities play in establishing marine protected areas? How much of the world's oceans are currently protected? How do we decide what should be protected and where?

TOXIC TOURISM?

Conduct a debate on the benefits and threats of tourism. Encourage students to conduct research so that their arguments are supported with concrete examples. This activity could have a local or global focus.



A tale to be told: Looking at the film as film

The story of Blueback is a beautiful tale of life, love and belonging, and with the fragility of our oceans and sea life as an underlying thread, it couldn't be more timely.
– Robert Connolly, Director

GENRE: WHAT SORT OF STORY IS THIS?

In what ways can *Blueback* be considered a David and Goliath tale?

In what ways can *Blueback* be seen as a fairy tale?

Explore the elements of allegory and fable. Does *Blueback* have a moral lesson for its audience?

After discussing the various themes of *Blueback*, have students select one (for example: greed, the fragility of the environment, mother-daughter relationships) and have students write a fable on this theme.



From top: Mia Wasikowska as Abby and Liz Alexander as Older Dora with Director Robert Connolly and Director of Photography (DOP) Andrew Commis; Ilsa Fogg as Teen Abby; DOP Andrew Commis; Director Robert Connolly

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ACTIVITY: EXPLORING FILMMAKING CHOICES AND CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES

C.A.M.E.L.S. is a great way to remember the key elements in filmmaking (standing for **C**amera Angles, **A**cting, **M**ise-en-scene, **E**ditng, **L**ighting and **S**ound). Students are to define the terms in **Table 3** and provide examples from *Blueback*:

▶ "Jump to Table 3" on page 14

Working in small groups, students should select a key scene from the film and consider the use of close ups, long shots, editing and music/sound in relation to the themes and characters. Share and discuss as a class.

Consider how the editing of shots has been used to select specific moments in the narrative of *Blueback* to convey information and explore themes/characters.

What layers of sound can you detect in the film? How has the sound been manipulated to create mood and atmosphere, establish location or progress the narrative?

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TABLE 3
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ACROBAT

YOUR NAME

<i>Filmmaking Element</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Example from Blueback</i>
Camera Angles		
Acting		
Mise-en-scene		
Lighting		
Sound		

INQUIRY

'The film suggests life is an accretion, a building up of layers and a gathering of depths.' Discuss how the portrayal of Abby at different ages is used to illustrate this. Consider important moments or milestones in her life.

'Ultimately *Blueback* is a film of tremendous optimism and hope. It tells us that it is not too late for us to live in harmony. Regeneration is possible.' Discuss.

The scale of the environmental crisis is overwhelming and for many people it is a source of despair and hopelessness (sometimes referred to as 'eco-anxiety'). This topic could provide a forum for students to share their feelings about the problems their generation will need to address. We must repeatedly pivot back to hope; everything depends on it. An inspiring book to consider sharing with your class or to direct students to is Jane Goodall's, *Book of Hope: A Survival Guide for Trying Times* (Viking, 2021).

OCEAN MUSIC

The film makes powerful use of music, including songs played at the funeral and the fireworks night, plus the lyrical and atmospheric Nigel Westlake score. Have students select their own piece of music that embodies the themes of the film for them and share it with the class.

* Nigel Westlake, Composer

Nigel Westlake's career, spanning almost five decades, began as a clarinettist touring Australia and the world with many ensembles. He began composing from 1980, receiving offers to write for radio, theatre, circus, television and film. His movie credits include *Blueback*, *Ali's Wedding*, *Paper Planes*, *Miss Potter*, *Babe*, *Babe II*, *Children of the Revolution*, *The Nugget* and the IMAX films *Antarctica*, *Imagine*, *Solarmax* and *The Edge*. His television credits include documentaries, telemovies, news themes and station idents. He writes extensively for the concert hall, receiving commissions from around the world to write for orchestras, ensembles and soloists.



From top: Mia Wasikowska as Abby;
Ilisa Fogg as Teen Abby

UNDER THE SEA

The film's underwater sequences are beautifully shot and contribute an enchanted, other-worldly dimension to the story. Select one underwater sequence and screen it again for students, having them respond by sketching what they feel/see, and jotting down words to describe the mood.

What challenges might the filmmakers have faced in shooting the underwater sequences? Students may want to look at David Attenborough 2015 series on the Great Barrier Reef for an insight into the logistical difficulties of underwater filming. Each episode ends with a ten minute behind the scenes sequence.

THE FILMMAKERS' VISION

The film conveys a wonderful sense of how who we are is informed by who we have been and by the places in which our lives have played out. This is conveyed visually by scenes in which adult Abby gazes out at her environment and sees her teenage self. It creates a lovely sense of continuity and embeddedness. What other visual techniques help to convey a sense of adult Abby reckoning with the past and its legacies?

Intersection: From page to screen ...

RESEARCH PROJECT: THE TELLERS OF THE TALE

In pairs, have students conduct research into either Tim Winton or Robert Connolly. Write a report on these two key creative figures, highlighting how *Blueback* sits in their bodies of work.

Why might the filmmakers have decided to change the gender of the protagonist? (Abel in the book becomes Abby in the film).

In the book, adult Abel is married and has a child (called Dora), giving the Jackson line continuity and an investment in the future. Abby is mostly a solitary figure. What effect do these changes have on the ways you understand the characters and themes of the film?

When developing the film five years ago, one of my daughters gave me a lot of grief about making another film with a male protagonist, particularly after my family film Paper Planes had seen a young boy win the competition! At the time I was seeing some incredible young women leading global conversations about the environment. The work of many of these environmentalists influenced my decision to change the gender of the main character.

THE PITCH

Imagine you were the producer for this film looking to secure funding. How would you persuade funding bodies that this is a story that needs to be told? What are your goals and aims? Who is the audience? In small teams, students collaborate to write a funding proposal. This could be run as an engaging, interactive performance activity, where a panel of students evaluate pitch proposals and select a winner. Success criteria could include:

- **persuasive techniques;**
- **detail;**
- **demonstrated familiarity with the text;**
- **polished presentation;**
- **effective teamwork skills, including productive use of time, cooperation, collaboration, initiative;**
- **and creative use of props & resources.**



From top: Ilsa Fogg as Teen Abby with Director Robert Connolly; Fishery Beach, Bremer Bay

I spoke to Tim Winton and he gave his blessing for me to change Abel to Abby. The film though is a universal story that speaks of young people leading change and while Abby is a teenage girl in this film, the character embodies the spirit and leadership of all young people as they challenge us to address the environmental issues our oceans face.

– **Director, Robert Connolly**

In the book, Dora ends up unable to walk by herself. In the film, the stroke she suffers renders her mute. What does her inability to speak represent and why might the filmmakers have chosen this affliction for her? What impact does it have on Abby?

The sea took Abby's father, his body never to be found. The sea also took Mad Macka, and Abby was charged with helping Dora lift his body from the ocean's floor. Why might the filmmakers have chosen to refrain from depicting these powerful moments on screen?

From top: Blueback; Ilsa Fogg as Teen Abby; Ilsa Fogg as Teen Abby and Blueback

BEAUTIFUL BLUEBACK

The magnificent groper Blueback gives the film its title. He is a wonderful character and, in terms of the narrative, he performs multiple functions in both book and film. Have students brainstorm all of the many things Blueback symbolises. Consider, for example:

- **He ties the three stages of Abby's life together.**
- **He embodies what is under threat.**
- **He connects Abby and Dora, situating them in the environment.**
- **He inspires Abby's professional vocation.**
- **He creates moments of narrative tension.**
- **He creates a connection for the audience to the environment.**

What does Blueback mean to Abby? Describe their relationships. What does she learn from him?

Winton describes Blueback poetically as 'the colour of all our dreams'. What do you think he means by this? How do the filmmakers convey this feeling?

Why might Tim Winton have decided to make his fish character a groper?



Discuss the scene in which Abby punches Blueback in order to save him from being speared. Can students come up with other examples from books and films where a character is compelled to hurt another in order to protect them? What does this say about Abby and her determination to ensure Blueback's survival? In the book, it is Dora who punches Blueback and he never approaches her again. Why might the filmmakers have changed this detail?

* Draw his dimensions

Blueback is huge! After students have researched the size of the blue groper, have them work in pairs to create an outline which they can then cut out and decorate.

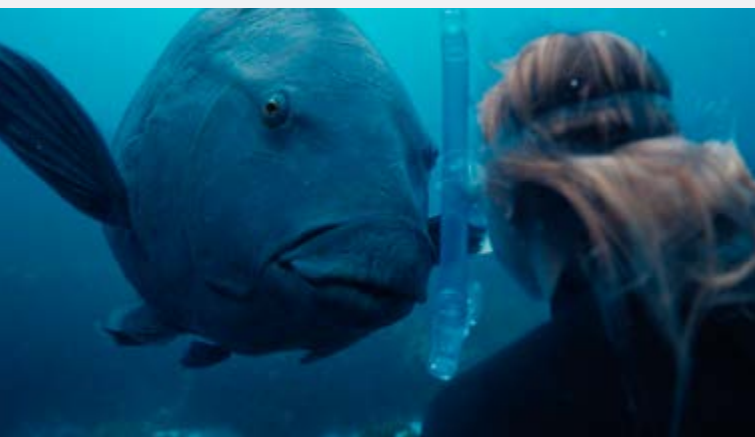


* Research task: Dive into the groper's world

Working in pairs, students research the western blue groper (*Achoerodus gouldii*), looking at its habits, habitat, life cycle, population and threats. They may present their findings to the class, providing an opportunity for speaking and listening assessment. Suggested research starting points are listed below. Discuss with students the text type features of an information report as required.

https://www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/recreational_fishing/fact_sheets/fact_sheet_western_blue_groper.pdf
<https://australian.museum/learn/animals/fishes/eastern-blue-groper-achorodus-viridis/>
<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/fish-species/species-list/blue-groper>

Fish in Focus: Western Blue Groper, Western Australian Museum, <https://museum.wa.gov.au/explore/blogs/glenn-moore/fish-focus-western-blue-groper>





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* Creative writing task: Once upon a time ...

What other stories can you think about in which children form deep friendships with animals? Why is this such a popular and enduring trope? After creating a list, have students write their own stories focusing on a child's relationship with an animal. Stories must be clearly structured, with a beginning (orientation), middle (development, complication, conflict) and end (resolution). In the planning stage, have students write a one or two sentence synopsis of their story, in order to clarify and articulate its purpose. Also direct students to consider tone and mood. Give students time to draft, edit and publish their stories in a format that suits your cohort. You could consider providing a real-world context for this activity by creating picture story books that students ultimately read to primary school aged children. Ensure students are clear about the parameters of the task and the value of it.

* Talking fish

If Blueback could talk, what might he say about his long life and experiences, all that he has seen? Have students work in pairs to create a comic strip with Blueback articulating a message from the depths. You may give students a pro forma with a set number of frames or allow them to make their own appropriate choices.

* Inquiry

'As a character, Blueback is more multi-faceted than the villain developer Costello.'
Discuss.

.....

* Once there were whales

Discuss the significance of the town's whaling history.

Discuss the scene in which Abby and Briggs explore the skeletal remains of the blue whale calf. Abby says sadly that she's never seen a whale, just maybe spouts off in the distance. Briggs says there used to be so many, legend says you could walk across their backs, the ocean was so crowded with them.

This gestures towards our terrible history of environmental devastation, our ignominious record of rendering rare and precious flora and fauna extinct or endangered.

The book and the film approach Abby's (and her family's) connection to whales differently. Why do you think this is the case?

From top: Ilsa Fogg as Teen Abby; Ilsa Fogg as Teen Abby and Pedrea Jackson as Teen Briggs

© Arenamedia Pty Ltd, photography by David Dare Parker



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Ilsa Fogg as Teen Abby with Pedrea Jackson as Teen Briggs, DOP Andrew Commis and Blueback crew

Resources

Books on Tim Winton

Salhia Ben-Messahel, *Mind the Country:*

Tim Winton's Fiction, University of Western Australia Press, 2006.

Michael McGirr, *Tim Winton: The Writer and His Work*, Macmillan Education, 1999.

Hilary McPhee (ed), *Tim Winton: A Celebration*, National Library of Australia.

Richard Rossiter & Lyn Jacobs (eds), *Reading Tim Winton*, Angus & Robertson, 1993.

Tim Winton, *The Boy Behind the Curtain*, Penguin Random House Australia, 2017.

Tim Winton, *Island Home - A Landscape Memoir*, Penguin Random House Australia, 2017.

Tim Winton, *Land's Edge - A Coastal Memoir*, Penguin Random House Australia, 2017.

More on *Blueback* the film

'All Star Cast Dives into *Blueback* In Western Australia', 22 February 2021: <https://www.ausfilm.com.au/news/all-star-cast-dives-into-blueback/>

Sean Slatter, 'Mia Wasikowska, Radha Mitchell and Eric Bana to star in Robert Connolly's *Blueback*', *if*, 16 February 2021: <https://if.com.au/mia-wasikowska-radha-mitchell-and-eric-bana-to-star-in-robert-connollys-blueback/>

Kit Mochan, 'WA's movie-making boom continues with film adaptation of Tim Winton's *Blueback*', *ABC News*, 22 January 2020: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-01-22/tim-winton-novel-blueback-to-commence-filming-in-wa/11886670>

Documentaries About the Ocean

My Octopus Teacher (Pippa Ehrlich & James Reed, 2020)

A Plastic Ocean (Craig Leeson, 2016)

Oceans (Jacques Perrin, 2010)

The Cove (Louie Psihoyos, 2009)

Before The Flood (Fisher Stevens, 2016)

Chasing Coral (Jeff Orlowski-Yang, 2017)

David Attenborough, *The Blue Planet*, BBC, 2001

Credits

Director: Robert Connolly • **Screenplay:** Robert Connolly • **Based on the book *Blueback*** by Tim Winton • **Producers:** Liz Kearney, James Grandison and Robert Connolly • **Director of Photography:** Andrew Commis • **Film Editor:** Nick Meyers • **Composer:** Nigel Westlake • **Production Designer:** Clayton Jauncey • **Costume Designer:** Lien See Leong • **Hair & Make-Up Designer:** Karen Sims • **Underwater Cinematographer:** Rick Rifici • **Sound:** Chris Goodes, Trevor Hope, Glenn Newnham and Andy Wright • **Casting Director:** Jane Norris • **Executive Producers:** Andrew Myer and Robert Patterson

* Cast

Mia Wasikowska as **Abby** • Radha Mitchell as **Dora** • Ilsa Fogg as **Teen Abby** • Liz Alexander as **Older Dora** • Ariel Donoghue as **Young Abby** • Clarence Ryan As **Briggs** • Pedrea Jackson As **Teen Briggs** • Erik Thomson As **Costello** • Eddie Baroo As **Merv** • Eric Bana as **Mad Macka**

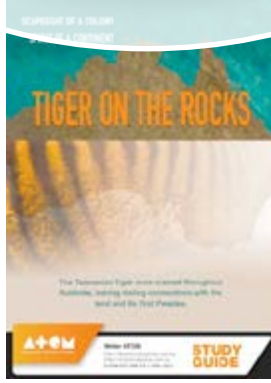
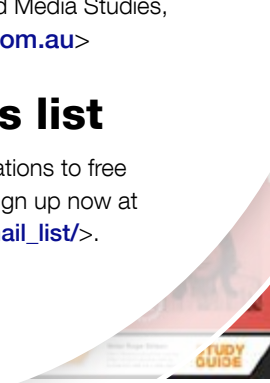
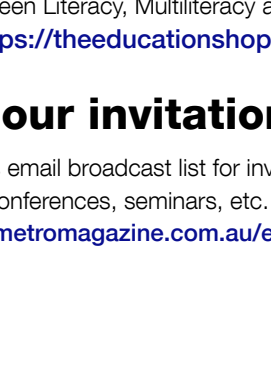
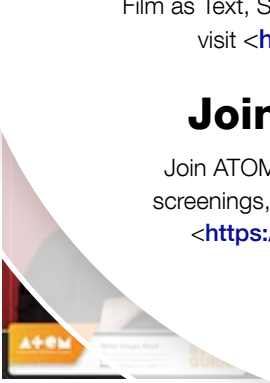
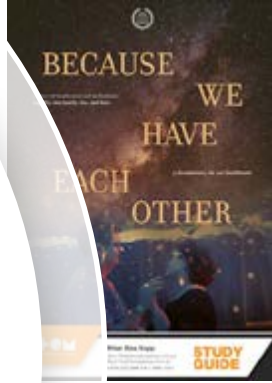
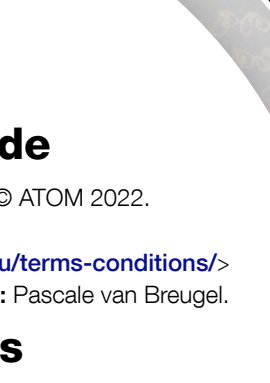
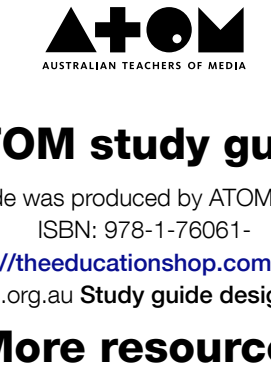
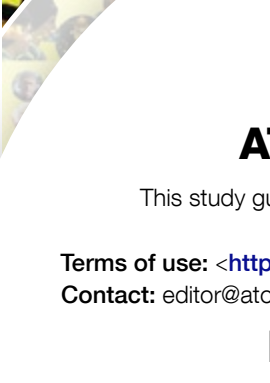
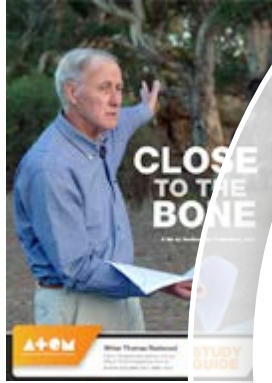
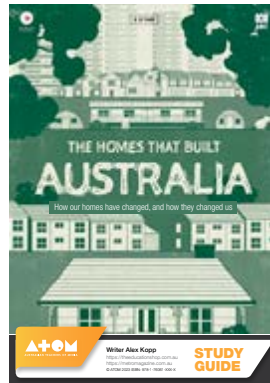

* Minderoo Foundation

Minderoo Foundation is the proud education partner for the film adaption of Tim Winton's best-selling novel, *Blueback*.

To help educators dive deeper into the film we have worked with ATOM to create this education resource.

Type 'Flourishing Oceans' into your web browser to find out how Minderoo Foundation is working to improve ocean health.



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