

UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND PRESS

# THE LITTLE WAVE

## Pip Harry



### Teachers' Notes

Written by a practising teacher librarian  
in context with the Australian curriculum  
(English)

ISBN: 978 0 7022 6047 6/ AUS \$14.95

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Synopsis          | 2 |
| Themes            | 2 |
| Writing Style     | 2 |
| Study Notes       | 2 |
| Author Motivation | 6 |
| About the Author  | 6 |

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools  
but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.

## UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND PRESS

**SYNOPSIS**

Noah, Lottie and Jack discover much about themselves and the importance of true friendship when a Sydney school hosts a class visit from the country. While Noah is struggling with the behaviour of his best friend, Lottie is trying to deal with the loss of her mother and its impact on her family. Jack, meanwhile, is faced with significant obstacles of his own.

Becoming friends through pen-pal letters, Noah and Jack help one another to take risks and be the best possible version of themselves. Lottie learns too that true friends accept one another unconditionally.

*The Little Wave* is a beautiful verse novel that uncovers the true essence of friendship, courage and the value of new experiences.

**THEMES**

- Friendship
- Grief
- Bullying
- Surfing
- Courage
- Acceptance

**WRITING STYLE**

*The Little Wave* is a verse novel told through the first person perspectives of Noah, Lottie and Jack. The verses afford the text a swift pace and direct structure, appealing to reluctant and avid readers alike. The narrative, therefore, is tangible and easily accessible to a range of middle readers. *The Little Wave* is both tender and powerful in exploring themes of friendship, acceptance and courage.

**STUDY NOTES**

- The first three verses introduce Noah, Lottie and Jack. How has the author used these characters to draw readers immediately into the text? What are your first impressions of these characters?
- Using the description on p1, draw a map of Mullin, including mapping conventions (e.g. border, orientation, legend, title and scale).
- Using Google Earth, view Manly and its beaches. How do the descriptions of this region compare with these images?
- Create a visual comparison of Sydney with Mullin, using clues from *The Little Wave* to identify similarities and differences.

## UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND PRESS

- Why does Noah describe surfing as ‘that feeling: excited, happy, scared, all at once’ (p3). Share an experience with a friend that made you feel like this.
- Discuss the formatting of the verses, particularly the choice of line breaks and position of words on the page. A good example is on p4 when Noah describes the beach as being his backyard. How do these choices add meaning to the poems?
- Explore the various poetic devices used throughout the text, discussing how they contribute to the narrative. Examples include:
  - o ‘Nothing grows from the thirsty, cracked earth’ (p2)
  - o ‘The sand curves in a C shape’ (p2)
  - o ‘Tide coming in ... wild and thrashing, or gentle as a sleeping cat, sly rips shifting underneath.’ (p4)
  - o ‘I was fished out by lifesavers. Thrown like a flathead with a hook in its jaw’ (p5)
  - o ‘I ... jump it up my body like a snakeskin’ (p23)
  - o ‘Being on a wave is like riding a rolling ball of energy that’s travelled hundreds of kays across the ocean.’ (p27)
  - o ‘The wave’s a curling tunnel’ (p28)’
  - o ‘If houses were teeth the rest of Gilbert Street would be straight, white and minty brushed. My place would be rotten, crooked and yellow.’ (p32)
  - o ‘I can’t stop the stuff growing like the mould in Dad’s work shoes.’ (p33)
  - o ‘Mr M’s looking at Lottie, who’s trying to hide like a snail in its shell.’ (p53)
  - o ‘It’s like pulling an onion weed out by the stem’ (p78)
  - o ‘the pile of garbage ... gets bigger every day, like a monster he keeps feeding.’ (p117)
  - o ‘I feel like a shiny helium balloon, slowly deflating.’ (p143)
- What clues do we get early in the text that Lottie’s dad is struggling with the death of his wife? How does his grief affect Lottie? How does this help you to better empathise with her?
- Discuss the relationship Lottie shared with her mother. Why is it important for her to remember her mother, rather than avoid thinking about her?
- How do you feel about Jack’s home life? What makes you feel sympathy for him? How do we know he is really trying to do the right thing? What is preventing him from doing so?
- Jack loves the surf because there are ‘no edges, no lane ropes ... no off-season’ (p20). What, in his everyday life, might create such restrictions for him?

## UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND PRESS

- How do you think Noah feels about his mother's insistence on watching him in the surf? Justify your thoughts with evidence from the text.
- Discuss the opening verse on p32 in which Lottie likens her house to 'rotten, crooked and yellow' teeth. How has Pip Harry used poetic devices to evoke Lottie's sense of helplessness and shame about the state of her house? Why does her father refuse to clean up, rather continuing to buy more junk?
- What does Jack mean when he says, 'my feet are tough, just like me' (p39). In what ways is Jack is tough?
- How do Adie and her friends make Lottie feel? Discuss the toxic nature of exclusion. Why has Pip Harry included these types of characters in *The Little Wave*?
- Why does Noah say 'the ocean is my happy place and he [Harley] makes it sad' (p45)? Is this Harley's intention? Discuss.
- Using details from the text to support your ideas, create a visual representation of Lottie's life before and after the death of her mother.
- Reread the verse on p42 in which Jack describes the danger of rivers. How is Alby like a river?
- Why does Mr M decide to pair Noah and Lottie up as a fundraising team?
- What does Lottie mean when she says that cleaning the rubbish at their house is like 'pulling an onion weed out by the stem' (p77)?
- Pair up with students from another class, allocating pen pals to one another. Write your first letter to each other similar to the first correspondence between Noah and Jack. What are your five favourite and least favourite things? What else would you like to share about yourself?
- What do Noah and Jack learn from one another about the nature of friendship?
- What do Noah and Lottie have in common? Why does Noah find it difficult to stand up to Harley about his friendship with Lottie?
- Discuss the role of minor characters such as Gerry from the 7-Eleven store and Skye.
- Why does Lottie feel like a 'shiny helium balloon, slowly deflating' (p143)? What advice would you give Lottie to help her in this situation?
- Examine Arthur Streeton's *A Road to the Range*. Why does Noah wonder if we have 'ruined all the quiet places with traffic lights and malls' (p152) after looking at this piece? How does this help him to appreciate rural Australia?
- After examining various images of the Australian countryside, create your own drawings of the bush (see p152). Alternatively, create a collage of the beach (see p155).
- What does the author mean when she says, 'bright things attract too much attention' (p154)? To whom is she referring?

## UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND PRESS

- How did you feel when you discovered that Miss Waites wanted to help Jack and Kirra?
- Why does Lottie decide to donate the garage sale proceeds to the fundraising event? What does this reveal about her nature?
- Why do Lottie and her dad decide to move house? How might this help them to move forward?
- Noah says he feels 'excited, nervous and happy' (p209) about meeting Jack in person. How is this similar to Noah's feelings about surfing? Why does he feel this way?
- Imagine you attended the movie night. Write a recount of this event.
- Taking on the role of either Noah, Jack or Lottie, write a letter to your pen pal after the Mullin children's visit.
- How does 'the little wave' that Jack learns to surf on symbolise the main message of the text?
- How are Jack's mother and Lottie's father similar characters? How do their challenges affect the lives of others? How are these difficulties overcome?
- How is Alby similar to Harley? Are they intentionally trying to make life difficult for Jack and Noah, or do they just know no different? Discuss.
- Why doesn't Mr M choose Lottie and Noah to fundraise for their trip to Mullin?
- How is the theme of friendship central to *The Little Wave*? What do readers learn about friendship through Noah, Lottie and Jack's journeys?
- Discuss the roles that Mr M and Miss Waites play in *The Little Wave*. In what ways do they help Noah, Lottie and Jack? Reflect on a person in your own life who has mentored and encouraged you.
- Select a series of verses of one of the characters' and retell their experiences in prose.
- Host your own movie night as a fundraiser for a worthy cause. Create posters, newsletter inserts, and tickets for this event.
- Noah and Lottie finally find a fiery skimmer when they are together at Narrabeen Lagoon. What does this discovery symbolize?
- Class 5M are hoping to visit Mullin. Assuming the role of either Noah or Lottie, write a series of verses about your trip to the country.
- Select one of the following topics to research and present to your class:
  - o Insects
  - o Reptiles
  - o Lagoons
  - o Threats to the ocean
  - o Humpback whales
  - o Beaches
  - o Surfing
  - o Cricket.

## UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND PRESS

**AUTHOR MOTIVATION**

The creative spark for *The Little Wave* came while I was sitting on Curl Curl Beach in Sydney after a swim in the sea. A group of rural schoolchildren (part of a Royal Far West residential camp which brings country kids to the coast) exuberantly sprinted down to the sand, playing in the surf, exploring rock pools and building sandcastles. It was incredible to witness many of these kids experience the vastness of the ocean, the pounding of waves and the taste of seawater for the very first time. I wondered how a trip like this might send a ripple into the lives of both the kids from the bush, and their hosts at the beach. I started writing in verse about two boys - one from a small outback town and one from Manly Beach in Sydney. Eventually I added a girls voice and over many drafts that initial idea became *The Little Wave*.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Pip Harry is the author of young adult novels *I'll Tell You Mine*, *Head of the River* and *Because of You*, which was shortlisted for the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards; the Children's Book Council of Australia – Book of the Year, Older Readers; and the Queensland Literary Awards. She currently lives and writes in Singapore.

[www.pipharry.com](http://www.pipharry.com)