

## OFF THE TRACK

CRISTY BURNE

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YEAR LEVEL: Y4–7

CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITIES: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures; Sustainability

### ABOUT THE BOOK

From the author of *To the Lighthouse* comes a new adventure for young readers about falling in love with the bush, and with hiking and being in the wild. It's about disconnecting from technology and discovering yourself.

Harry's perfect life was straying way off track. He looked pleadingly at Mum. Surely she could see? Spending an entire weekend tramping around stinking-hot, snake-filled scrub was a horrible mistake. But doing it without a phone? That was just brutal.

As it turns out, it was only the beginning ...

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cristy Burne grew up climbing trees, jumping drains, chasing cows and inventing stories. She has a passion for learning through doing and loves to inspire creativity, daring and resilience in her readers. Cristy is a children's author and science writer with degrees in biotechnology and science communication. She has also worked as a science circus performer, garbage analyst, Santa's pixie, and atom-smashing reporter.

### THEMES

- Bushwalking
- Camping
- Friendship
- Family
- Technology

### AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

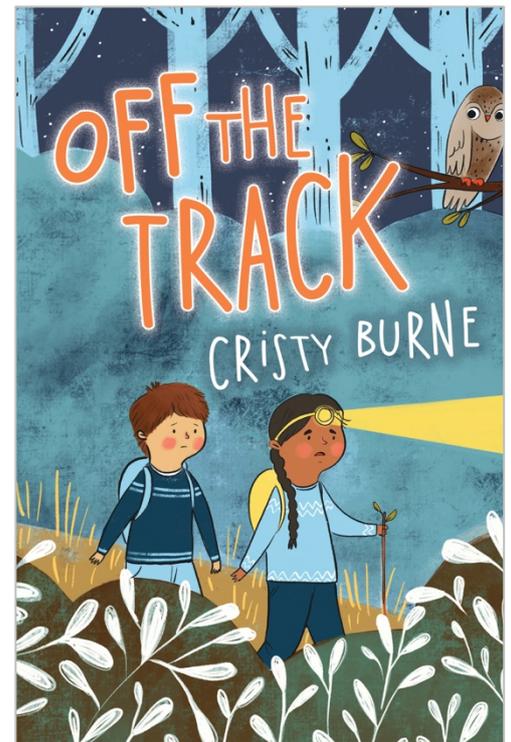
Y4–7 English

Y4–7 Biological Sciences

Y4–7 History and Geography

### USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author's website: [www.cristyburne.com](http://www.cristyburne.com)



## CLASSROOM IDEAS

### Discussion questions

1. Why do you think Ana takes so many things out of Harry's backpack? In pairs, make a list of essential items you would take on an overnight camping trip in the bush.
2. Why is Harry desperate to take his mobile phone along on the hike? Do you think this is a good idea? Why/why not?
3. Harry is apprehensive about potential dangers on their hike (e.g. spiders, snakes, getting lost). In pairs, divide an A3 piece of paper into three columns. In the first column, list possible hazards in the bush. In the middle column, research how to minimise each of these risks. In the final column, explain the actions you would take if each emergency occurred. Include references.
4. Compare and contrast Harry's attitude towards the following at the beginning and the end of the book:
  - a. Camping and the great outdoors
  - b. His friendship with Deepika
  - c. Mobile phones and technology
  - d. His relationship with his mum
5. How does Harry change as a result of his experiences in the bush? Does his mum change too?
6. Have you ever predicted that an activity would be boring but found that it turned out to be fun?

### Creative writing and visual art

1. Use an A3 narrative planning framework to map the different parts of this book (e.g. exposition, conflict, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution).
2. Use the narrative planning framework above to draft your own short story about one of the following: 'A misadventure in the bush' or 'An adventurer breaking new ground in an unexplored land.'
3. At the end of the story, Harry describes his mum by saying *Her smile danced with the warmth of the fire* (p.121). What is a metaphor and how can it enhance imagery? Can you find other similes and metaphors throughout the book? Can you create your own to use in your stories?
4. In groups of 2–4, choose your favourite scene from *Off the Track* to transform into a script to perform for your class.
5. Go for a class bushwalk. Take a clipboard, piece of paper and pencil and make notes on the following: *I am walking in the bush. I see ... I feel ... I smell ... I hear ... I notice ... I wonder ...* Upon returning to school, write a set of three haikus about the landscape.
6. Deepika enjoys telling jokes such as *What kind of music do kangaroos listen to? ... Hopera.* In pairs, come up with some Australian bush themed jokes of your own.
7. Illustrate your favourite scene from the story on A3 paper using any medium of your choice. Display around the classroom.

### Research activities

1. As you read the story, create a list of the plants and animals Harry and Deepika encounter (e.g. crevice dragons, marri etc.). Choose one and create a fact sheet with the following headings: name, habitat, diet life cycle, interesting facts, labelled diagram, conservation status. Include a reference list.
2. Using the descriptions in the book, create a map depicting the children's journey on their hike.
3. The trail marker is the Waugal, or Rainbow Serpent. What is the story of the Waugal Dreaming? (Useful link: [www.noongarculture.org.au/spirituality](http://www.noongarculture.org.au/spirituality))
4. Shade Noongar country on a map of Western Australia. Which Aboriginal people are the traditional owners in your own region? Research some local placenames in your own region that originate in the local Aboriginal language(s).

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