

Teacher's Notes

Sky

by Ondine Sherman



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Recommended for ages 12-15 years

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INTRODUCTION

When Sky Lawson's mum dies of cancer, Sky has to leave her Sydney home, her school and her friends to go and live in the middle of nowhere with her Aunt Paula and Uncle David in the small NSW town of West Creek. Her father has never been a part of her life and Sky struggles to connect with her aunt who she hardly knows.

When her mum was alive, Sky knew who she was: she was her mother's daughter. Kind-hearted and full of a passion for justice. Her mum had been proud of her—and Sky had been proud of her mum too, who had protested in sit-ins against logging and gone on marches against whaling.

But now her mum isn't here anymore.

West Creek High is a small school in a tiny town, but it has the same rules about popularity as any high school anywhere. In the wake of loneliness after losing her mother, Sky is determined to join West Creek High's in-group. She fights between her desire to belong, and her desire to remain true to her values.

Sky is a vegan. She used to be a vegetarian but has recently stopped eating animal products altogether. Her hero is Jane Goodall and the suffering of animals makes her suffer, and that makes her angry, and then she doesn't know what to do. On Instagram, Sky is able to connect with other people who understand – including one cute boy who loves dogs as much as Sky does.

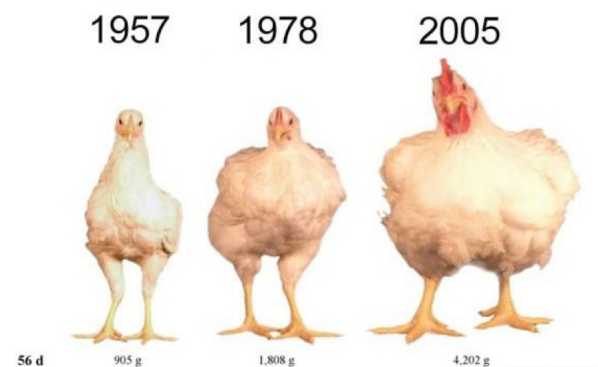
Living vegan in West Creek proves difficult. Aunt Paula has forgotten Sky doesn't eat meat, and Sky is worried it will make it hard for her to fit in with the in-group girls. So, when she gets an invite to the leader of the group's birthday party, Sky finds herself committing a series of betrayals against her own values as she slowly manages to merge into their group.

As part of a school project, Sky interviews a local chicken farm, but she does not trust the

shiny brochures of the farm owner. The owner talks to her like she's a child, in euphemisms, and enthuses over the happy life of the chickens in his sheds. In a moment of lawlessness, Sky sneaks into the chicken shed to see for herself.

What she finds shocks her and complicates everything.

The floor is hidden under a sea of chickens and poo. Chickens are crammed in a shed with no daylight, crawling over one another in the lack of space, and the smell is sickening. From this chicken shed, Sky 'liberates' one chick, who she names Chirp. Further investigations for her project unearth more about the inhumane practices of the broiler chicken industry, including a legal practice of selective breeding that has left Chirp unable to walk.



This kind of selective breeding of chickens for breast size and speed of growth leads to crippling deformities.¹

This one small political act sets Sky on a course back to herself. It's a course which sees her collide with one of West Creek's prominent businessmen, rock the in-group, and realise that true friends care about a person's heart not just their hair. Sky's struggle between belonging and integrity brings her maturity. Eventually it brings her acceptance of her mothers' death and leads her back to those values from which she draws strength. And along the way, she meets some true friends who share her values.





ONDINE SHERMAN: AUTHOR BACKGROUND & MOTIVATION

When I was a teen, I was extremely passionate about helping animals. However, all the materials, films and books about animal protection were focused on adults and learning about the issues was often a difficult and even traumatic experience for me. With *Sky*, I wanted to make a safe space for teenagers to learn and think critically about animal protection.

I really believe in the power of teenagers. Animal protection is the next great social justice movement and young people have the passion, open minds, idealism and creativity to create change. I hope that soon we will see an end to the cruelty of factory farming and create a more compassionate world for animals.



TEXTUAL FEATURES OVERVIEW

- Contemporary, Australian, YA fiction
- Intimate first-person narrative
- Coming-of-age fiction
- 'Mouthpiece' fiction
- Political interest: animal rights, activism
- 'Outsider' fiction





A NOTE ON SKY'S INTERROGATION OF THE HUMAN/ANIMAL RELATIONSHIP

One of the recurring questions in *Sky* is about the relationships between humans and other animals, including the interesting question of why some are our pets and others our food.

Dogs, for instance, are loved and celebrated throughout the text, as they live in our homes. Our intimate relationship with dogs is based on many factors, including a long history of co- evolution, but mainly our knowledge of them and their habits. We have learnt that they are 'smart' and 'loving', and that they have different temperaments. Because of this, they have gained the status of individuals in human society. They are somewhat like other humans to our minds; many people call them their 'babies'. We know their peculiarities, we nurture their well-being, and we grieve when they are lost to us.

Individuals in human society automatically merit respect, which can lead to love. In contrast, most people know little of the temperaments or peculiarities of chickens. Because of our ignorance, they have no individual status. We think they are all the same. We think they have no intelligence, and make no bonds with other chickens. Such ignorance creates the emotional distance that allows us to kill and eat them with no sense of contradiction.

More unpalatably it creates the distance that allows for their maltreatment. It allows us to let them suffer.

Sky presents opportunities to discuss these contradictions.

The text provides instances of the touching peculiarities of chickens that tend toward closing that distance. New information about the lives of chickens, and *Sky's* relationship with Chirp, builds bridges to deeper understanding. The text makes claims for the chicken that elevate it to the status of individual, and therefore inherently deserving of respect.

'Chirp. He totally adores me. He's the groupie to my rockstar. Every time I appear, he erupts into chattering cheeps, clucks and chirps, and when I open the cage he follows me around like Bella does at home. Lucy and I find his dust bathing hilarious—a chicken rolling, kicking his legs with glee, and covering himself in dirt like Bella when she finds something deliciously smelly. And when I sit down, tired from laughing, Chirp pecks about looking for insects and then climbs onto my lap where I stroke his feathers like a cat.' *Sky* p133

Discussions about animal welfare segue into discussions of how we view, and therefore treat, human beings about whom we know little or nothing.





SKY & THE CURRICULUM: A GENERAL OVERVIEW

The text supports learning across the areas of Literacy, ICT, Critical & Creative Thinking, Personal & Social Capability, and Ethical Understanding.

- **Literacy:** *Sky* is a fictional text motivated by the author's moral concern for animal rights. Emotionally persuasive material is creatively presented through a variety of textual strategies, including the use of 'mouthpiece' characterisation, vigilant factual research, and the careful use of such fact inside fiction.
- **ICT:** *Sky's* protagonist uses websites, blogs and Instagram to fact-find, share information, and find support blogs.
- **Critical & Creative Thinking:** *Sky* analyses and critiques real-world information within a fictional story. It presents claims and counter-claims about animal welfare and agriculture from a variety of sources, including claims made by science, animal welfare organisations, and big business. It embeds its argument within an exploration of the truth of such claims.
- **Personal & Social Capability:** *Sky's* setting, a high school in a small town, allows the text to examine the dynamics of relationships on many different levels, including the dynamics of family, teen friendship, social status, community responsibility, and sexuality. In particular, the text treats the conflicting desires to simultaneously fit in with a group and stay true to one's values. It explores some results of betraying such values in order to gain social approval.
- **Ethical Understanding:** *Sky* promotes personal investigation and political action into ethical issues in the real world. Concerned with the widespread subjective response to the treatment of animals, it would complement more objective studies of food production. The text also provides a model of why and how a citizen of a democracy might register disagreement, gather support, and make change through protest and action.





SKY & THE CURRICULUM: DETAILS & ACTIVITIES

1. A GAME FOR ANYONE, ANYTIME, ANYWHERE: WHAT ANIMAL IS THAT?

An animal is more than the sum of our uses for their bodies. They have species-specific behaviours that grow out of complex but specific adaptations, and they also share qualities and abilities we recognise from our own species and from our pet animals. They are simultaneously different from and similar to us and more remarkable than we can entirely know. Learning about any particular animal is always enlightening, and a lot of fun!

Did you know?

- Chickens learn faster than dogs. They can count to six, and they talk to their chicks before they hatch. Also, chickens are the closest living relative to the Tyrannosaurus-Rex.²
- Cows are red-green colour-blind. They have best friends and fret when they are separated. They even have regional accents.³
- Pigs have snouts that are about 2000 times more sensitive than the human nose. They are highly intelligent: there are pigs that have learnt to dance, sniff out landmines, and play video games. On a farm they are the only animal that makes a sleeping den, and uses a specific area for a toilet.⁴

Activity: All Creatures Great & Small – Guess Who

RESEARCH any animal using a mix of sources [\[see Links & Resources at end of document\]](#).

MAKE A LIST of facts about the animal's behaviour and abilities.

PRESENT your list of facts to the class, one by one, and see how long it takes for people to GUESS the animal.





2. LITERACY & LANGUAGE: WRITING SAD, WRITING ANGRY

Sky is a text that carries an animal welfare message, a subject about which the author, Ondine Sherman, has strong feelings. Communicating effectively on matters about which we care deeply is a challenge people have always faced, but in today's hyper-connected world, it is more important than ever to master clear, controlled communication. Uncontrolled emotion does not make for clarity. Neither does a willingness to spin the facts into more pleasing shapes. It is a strong grasp of fact, a practice of disciplined passion, and a refusal to spin, that enables people to effectively fight for their causes.

Activity: Three Ways to Say It

CREATE three short written texts centring on an issue about which you are angry or sad. Use the same subject for all three texts. The same research may be used for different purposes.

1. Informative text

This should be an unemotional text that delivers researched facts in a reporting style. CHOOSE one facet of your issue to explore. RESEARCH this facet online looking for verifiable facts, not opinion or commentary. COLLECT as much information as you can in the time you have [see Activity 6: Truth or Truthiness].

WRITE one paragraph in which you provide an overview of your facet of the subject. Do not respond to these facts with emotion, either overtly or in subtext. WATCH your language for judgemental terms. Organise the information so that a reader who knows nothing of your subject can follow your data.

Note that purely informative texts are not unemotional for readers. The facts alone are often enough to create in readers a pro- or anti-position with regard to any issue. Plain facts of cruelty and suffering, in particular, provoke strong reactions in readers with no need for emotional 'nudging'.

2. Persuasive text

This should be a short but persuasive piece about the same subject. Persuasive texts allow for emotionally motivating language, and tend to deploy facts as bearers of inferences. Using your research from the previous activity LOOK CLOSER at the facts. ASK YOURSELF, what does this infer? For instance, the fact of residents of the USA each eating 122kg of meat a year and Bangladeshis eating 1.8kg carries many inferences to draw out, including global imbalances in wealth, the need for practical sustainability and failures in global moral responsibility.





WRITE three short paragraphs persuading an imagined reader who is undecided on the subject, to accept your interpretation of the facts.

The FIRST PARAGRAPH will introduce the issue and state your position along with your interpretation of the research. The SECOND PARAGRAPH will introduce the opposition and its claims, and the THIRD PARAGRAPH will robustly engage the opposition's interpretations and restate your position. Note that writing a little emotion is often harder than writing a lot or none; it may help to let yourself go at first and later do a BIG DELETE.

EDIT for meaning. Delete repetitions, redundancies, and veiled insults still hiding in the text, and RE-CHECK your factual claims. Finally EDIT for grammar and spelling.

3. **Fictional text**

This should be a short imaginative text in which emotion may be given free rein. It does not have to contain humans: it could utilise animal protagonists or be set on another planet or have the earth itself speaking. Reframing the subject in this way helps to find a way to say the hard things in interesting ways.

Still using the same research BRAINSTORM your initial ideas on plain paper using pictures, colours, dialogue bubbles, or anything that helps you think outside your usual boxes. DRAW & SCRIBBLE FREELY.

DECIDE on your setting and event. WHO are your characters? WHAT do they feel? WHAT has happened? WHY? HOW did it start? WHAT is the result?

WRITE the first paragraph in class. FINISH it at home, or in a later session.

Finally, TEST it on your friends. LISTEN to their feedback.





3. CIVICS & CITIZENSHIP/HISTORY: THE POLITICAL IS PERSONAL

Sky contains a personal objection to animal maltreatment that leads into political protest and public activism, two activities that are embedded parts of any functioning democracy. *Sky* is proud that back in the day her mother Eleanor attended protests against whaling (p16) and logging (p35), and when presented with the opportunity to protest animal maltreatment *Sky* takes up that opportunity naturally. It is part of her family history.

Much public activism of the past fifty years is now part of Big History. From the activism of second wave feminism, through the marches against the Vietnam War, to the mass gatherings of the eighties protesting the advent of nuclear arms, Australia has been counted among the democracies whose populations have played a watchdog role in government policy.

Activity 1: What Do We Want?

RESEARCH anti-whaling and anti-logging protest and activism over the last twenty years [[See Links & Resources at end of document](#)]. The research can be done at home or school, but the enquiry can include speaking with parents or other adults as part of an Oral History project. They might well have been involved in the protests mentioned in *Sky*. You may manually transcribe or record these interviews. In class DISCUSS these collected narratives of public protest. The following questions may help start an interesting conversation, but the direction of the discussion should be led by students.

- The facts on the day: what are the protesters opposing? What are their reasons for opposition? What year is it? Who is in government? How are the authorities responding to the protest? What form is the protest taking? How many people are there? Who is speaking? Is there violence? Is there a police presence and how are they behaving?
- The protest over time: was the protest effective? In what ways was it effective? In what ways was it non-effective? Did results take time? How much time? Are people still protesting the same behaviours fifty years later? Why do you think this might be?

In any discussion, one person should speak at a time without interruption. It is not necessary to agree but it is necessary to LISTEN. You don't have to set a minimum time for speaking but do set a maximum time.

To extend this study of political activism, move from these instances of protest against logging and whaling, to other instances. Start by interviewing adult family and friends.





Activity 2: When Do We Want It?

RESEARCH in detail one public protest or instance of activism over the past fifty years.

There are many to choose from, including:

- Protests against the development and deployment of nuclear weapons;
- Protests against Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War;
- Protests against unfair global fiscal policy from the Make Poverty History movement;
- Protests against contemporary Australian refugee policy. [\[see Links & Resources at end of document\]](#).

GATHER your FACTS. Make a timeline of government policy on the issue, and ensuing protests.

TRACE successes and failures of the protest over time. This initial stage of the project is concerned with factual reportage [\[see activity #2 Writing Angry, Writing Sad\]](#)

RESEARCH, online and through documentary, the personal side of political protest. You may like to CONVERSE with parents and/or adult friends about their political journeys; many will have experience in at least one political protest.

Through this research, CONSIDER protesters' stated motivations for their protests. This section will inevitably include a discussion of feelings, in that protest is generally based more on moral and emotional objection than practical concern. Keep the interviewees' emotional statements inside their quotes---in other words, don't join in!

Interviewees trust you to not misrepresent them. Personal conversations such as interviews should be treated as historic primary source material. CAREFULLY CHOOSE those statements to be used and then DO NOT EDIT.

Interview conventions try to retain original meaning, through authentic speech. If your interviewee has odd or ungrammatical speech, in the transcript you can insert the Latin term *sic* in brackets after each instance. (*Sic* is short for *sicut* and is a direction to leave any phrase or word as it is.) Likewise, if you shorten what the interviewee has said, in the interest of space, be sure to show any missing text by inserting ellipses to show that some of the text is missing. Never remove text that changes the meaning of the interviewee's words.

CREATE the DOCUMENT, using HEADINGS and SUBHEADINGS to guide readers through the material. INSERT IMAGES that extend the reading experience. For online readers you may INSERT LINKS to connected web-based material. EDIT for meaning, including a grammar and spelling check. REMOVE repetitions and redundancies.





EDIT for meaning, including a grammar and spelling check. REMOVE repetitions and redundancies.

Don't forget to CITE your SOURCES. LIST INTERVIEWEES by full name, and record the dates and places they were interviewed. Include a BIBLIOGRAPHY.

NOTE: If creating an online document, this project can include uploaded aural interview material in Oral History form.

4. AN ESSAY TOPIC

'You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.'- *Jane Goodall quoted in Sky*

5. LITERACY/LANGUAGE: ON SPIN

VOCAB STOP!

Spin: To provide an interpretation of (a statement or event, for example), especially in a way meant to sway public opinion.

Origin: Middle English spinnen, to twist fiber into thread, from Old English spinnan.⁵

'They have a good life, no cages and plenty to eat and drink,' he says. 'It's like Club Med.' He winks again. 'In an indoor environment, chickens are less stressed and have a lower mortality rate. That means they live longer,' he adds. 'And without happy, healthy birds, we wouldn't have a good-quality product or a successful business. So, it's in our interests that they are well looked after.' [Sky pp103]

Spin is a subsection of public relations. Positive spin uses strategically positive and/or comforting language to reduce anxiety and deflect criticism. Sometimes spin is used to inflate people's fear or disapproval instead, using strategically frightening language or suggestion. The language of spin tends to euphemism and sentimentalism, with repetition playing a large role in its effect. In addition, facts are presented as though they have only one 'intelligent' interpretation.

Activity: Creating Spin

VOCAB STOP!

Euphemism: A mild, indirect, or vague term for one that is considered harsh, blunt, or offensive.

Origin: Greek euphēmismos, from euphēmizein, to use auspicious words.⁶





READ chapter twelve of *Sky*. LOOK CLOSELY at chapter twelve, in which Sky visits the chicken farm. CONSIDER the narrative of broiler chicken life provided by Greg, and at the information provided by the school study kit. LIST the euphemisms and other instances of spin, such as positive interpretations of neutral data. DISCUSS, as a class, how such spin might work on readers.

CREATE an ADVERTISEMENT using euphemism and spin to sell something that most people wouldn't want to buy. It could be in the form of a brochure, or a poster, or it could be a filmed advertisement.

In SMALL GROUPS decide on which form of advertisement you are interested in producing. DECIDE also who it is you are trying to 'spin', who is your target or your audience?

DISCUSS products or ideas that would be hard to sell. Here are some examples:

- Making the Nullarbor into landfill for the world ... for a charge of course
- School uniforms made mandatory for teachers

In your group, BRAINSTORM ideas for layout and content. WRITE your copy as a group, using mutually agreed material. Use ideas from the euphemism and spin list you have created as a class to get started. Feel free to play with ideas.

Now PLAN the advertisement with your group. Who will run the SOFTWARE? Who will take charge of IMAGERY? Who will EDIT? Spin is not outright lying; it an emotional manipulation of the truth. The facts are right but they are dissembled in some way. So, who will FACT CHECK?

When you have assembled all the elements of your advertisement, CREATE it together.

PRESENT it to the class as a group. DISCUSS your choice of language and imagery, and how it deflects the unpleasant truths of your subject matter.





6. LITERACY/ICT: TRUTH OR TRUTHINESS

VOCAB STOP! Authenticity: True, real or genuine⁷

'Our "digital natives" may be able to flit between Facebook and Twitter while simultaneously uploading a selfie to Instagram and texting a friend. But when it comes to evaluating information that flows through social media channels, they are easily duped ... Overall, young people's ability to reason about the information on the Internet can be summed up in one word: bleak.' - Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning⁸

According to the above article, many USA middle school students could not distinguish an ad from a news story, and high school students reading about gun laws too often did not notice that a chart used in the material originated with a gun owners' lobby group. This basic online illiteracy is complicated by people preferring to interact in 'echo-chambers' within the online environment rather than browsing new areas. Such illiteracy leaves people open to textual manipulations, including political and commercial 'spin'.

Knowing a 'spin' when you see one is a payoff of learning to recognise and analyse many types of text. Online activity reflects the total range of human knowledge and opinion. This activity can be informative, entertaining, funny (or funny-peculiar), or malicious. Checking the reliability of material presented as factual is central to your integrity, off- and online. Information should always be checked for authenticity, accuracy and timeliness.

The conventions of good scholarship have never been more important, and these conventions start with sourcing verifiable basic data. The data must be found, analysed, and embedded in your interpretation using a correct citation method.

Activity: Be Alert, Not Alarmed!

Websites present various types of reliability problems for academic research. There are the problems of vested interest including commercial interest and political bias. There are the problems of emotional manipulation, and the use of pseudo-science. Often accompanied by photo-shopped images and meaningless or skewed graphs, such websites present quite a challenge. This situation has been made worse by the notion of a 'Post-truth' world, in which a fact is only an opinion that won the public relations war.

The range of 'information' available is mind-boggling. Have a look at:

- an alfoil hat that will stop most forms of mind control⁹
- the film 'proof' that the moon landings never happened¹⁰

Guide students with a list of websites to investigate. You can make your own list, or use the list at [Teacher Tap](#) as a starter.





In small groups LOOK CLOSELY at the websites. APPLY the CHECKLIST below to each site, exploring the sections that facilitate site appraisal.

Use the CRAAP test: this test will help students to critically evaluate the sources. For these types of tasks, it is often beneficial to students to give them a summary approach as otherwise it can be overwhelming. Each letter stands for a key area to look at when examining a source. Using scaffolds like CRAAP help students remember the skill of source analysis. It has been developed by a team of librarians at Californian State University, headed by Sarah Blakesee in 2010.

ALTERNATIVELY, run the following checklist:

- Is it a personal page or site? Personal sites do not provide reliable objective data.
- Most personal sites are experience- or opinion-based. If you find information here that you want to cite, you will need to do further research.
- What type of website is it? Does it have the domain name .com .net .gov .org .edu? What does this mean for its purpose and content? Is it commercial; personal; government; educational? Is it selling, informing, sharing?
- Who is the author? Is it an individual or an organisation? Look for About Us or Background page for overview of the site's purpose and history. Does the individual author have expertise? Does the organisation have a public profile? Look for a statement of the author's credentials. Any site lacking these elements should be mistrusted as a source for citable information.
- What are other users saying about the author or organisation? Do a web search.
- Which other sites use the website? Type 'link:' followed by the URL (no spaces) of the website you are checking, into a search engine. You will see other websites that are linked to, or use, the site. When a website is linked to many personal or commercial sites, this site should not be cited academically.
- Is it current information, or has it been outdated by more recent findings? Check the date the information was posted.
- Is the information accurate? Check in-text references and look for a bibliography. Lack of either is a red flag for students looking for citable information.
- Check any Links from the website to other sources. Do they work?

[See Links & Resources at end of document for the full printable checklist from SACE].





7. LITERACY & LITERATURE/DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY: THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

The story of Sky's political awakening is the story of most people's political awakening. An initially private emotional response becomes a personal conviction that eventually translates into a public politic. As Sky has learnt more, her concern for the lives of animals has become an integrated motivating factor in her life. Now she has grown into a vegan, unable to withstand silently the injustice she perceives. To reverse the second-wave feminist slogan, for Sky the personal has become political. At this point her personal conviction crosses into the public and political sphere; she sneaks into the chicken shed and rescues Chirp the broiler chick.

Or to look at it another way, she trespasses and steals.

Learning how to give public voice to personal convictions is important. In a democracy there are a number of forums for such activity. One of the popular recent forums is the online blog, which provides a platform for communicating and responding, learning and teaching, and additionally connects people into communities of like-minded individuals.

Activity: Blog It!

MAKE a LIST of political injustices nominated by students. DISCUSS briefly. Through such discussions students will see who in the class shares their convictions.

Form SMALL GROUPS, up to six people, who share a conviction. PLAN a group blog. Planning the blog's purpose will determine its form.

RESEARCH blog platforms (WordPress, Blogger, Typepad) and discuss before committing. Some are free, some are not.

Consider doing an ONLINE INSTRUCTION in blog-building before you start, such as the one [on this Blog Instructions website](#).¹²

ASK yourself questions:

- What is your blog for? Is it to attract and educate people? To provide a communal space for planning of protest and attempts to change policy? To provide fellowship and support?
- Who is your blog for? Is it for children? Young adults? Everyone?
- What will be your blog's primary focus? Choose one or two facets of the issue to explore first. Every political issue has many facets and it's easy to overload a text with too much information, especially if you're passionate. You can broaden the blog's foci as you receive feedback.
- What will your blog be called? A name helps keep the group focused on the chosen facet/s of the issue. This will be your domain name so make sure it tells people who you are immediately
- Do you follow a blogger? What do you like about their blogs? What don't you like?





When collecting or creating content be painstaking about integrity. Some people will not only be put off your blog by its dissembling, wishful thinking, or personal attacks. They will be put off your cause too.

CREATE CATEGORIES for content. STRUCTURE your blog to be easily navigable and user friendly, using lists and headings and consistent active content.

RESEARCH content using reliable sources and VERIFY information [see activity #5: Truth or Truthiness?].

In the group EVALUATE incoming data and imagery for effectiveness and redundancy. CONSIDER your target audience at all times.

Use IMAGES to add emotional depth, and simple GRAPHS to make explicit the meanings of numerical information. POWER POINT presentations may be uploaded to provide simple timelines, or entertaining storytelling. Consider using HUMOUR.

BE CIVIL to and about opponents. Keep in mind that most people are acting out of what they believe, not trying to upset you.

Before launching your blog, perform one more EDIT for repetition, redundancy, grammar and spelling.

Lastly, set up a ROSTER for online editing, managing comments, and keeping content current.





8. ECONOMICS & BUSINESS/DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Successful businesses build positive relationships with consumers. To achieve this, businesses must 'brand' themselves as standing for something. A brand is a personal thing. Consumers are attracted to products and businesses for the same reasons people are attracted to anything: that is, on a fundamental level the product fits their ideas about who they are. We make most purchase decisions emotionally, deciding in a flash whether a product is for us or not for us.

Increasingly one of the measures people use to judge a product includes its ethic of production: for instance, is it made in a sweat-shop, is its production poisoning the water or soil, or is it cruel in its animal practices? To satisfy such consumer concerns businesses must be prepared to innovate. This means that consumers regularly engage business in negotiations about its methods of production in order to bring about change.

It is consumers who keep businesses on their moral toes!

Activity: The Extraordinary Project

'I've been thinking of how to make my project extraordinary and that means not relying on info from the internet, but seeing things with my own eyes.' Sky p34

Sky is concerned that her project on an agricultural business should be extraordinary. This provides opportunities to discuss what makes for a great project; one that is satisfying to pursue as well as receive, and one that may bring great marks!

First READ the description of Sky's finished project on p157 of Sky, noting the different forms of information the project uses: 'facts, figures, references and colourful graphs' are all mentioned. Sky also identifies a common problem with her project. The assignment description asks for a 'celebration' of Australian agriculture, but Sky does not see how she can celebrate the subject given her personal convictions regarding animal cruelty. She must balance the project's aim with what she has learnt, and compromise to get her marks. DISCUSS in class what makes for an extraordinary project.

CHOOSE a local business to investigate. You may choose one to 'celebrate'—such as a plant nursery—or you may choose one to simply explore. Or you may choose a business you wish to open negotiations with about their production technique.

RESEARCH your chosen business, collecting information in as many different ways as you can:

- Online searches
- Browse libraries: local, state or specialist
- Visit sites of operation, go on tours
- Interview workers, managers, executives





ASK QUESTIONS beginning with a simple fact-based enquiry:

- What does the business produce?
- How long has it been producing?
- Original founder? Family business?
- How many people does the business employ? Who makes up the workforce? (Gender? Country of origin? Ages?)
- Changes to method or materials over time? Why any changes?

THEN ASK MORE QUESTIONS:

- Is there a company motto or credo? How is it expressed in the work? Do they live up to their own credo?
- Has there been controversy about method or material? What about?
- Or conversely, has there been unusual public approval? What about?
- How do people feel about their work? Are they proud of the product?
- Do the executives know what is happening in the workplace?

DO NOT LEAD interviewees. It is best to ask a question and just let people talk. RECORD everything, they say. If you're interviewing someone who works in an industry you consider unethical, control your indignation and you'll get fuller answers.

VERIFY material you have collected from the internet. CITE in full any books from which you have taken information. KEEP INTERVIEW RECORDS citing full name, place and date of interview, and the interviewee's role or relationship to the business. TAKE PHOTOS on any tours or visits to work sites, if it's legal to do so.

CONVERT numerical information to graph form. People better interpret numerical information with a visual aid.

CREATE the document using word processing software, importing your images and graphs. Don't forget to categorise and structure your information using HEADS and SUBHEADS, bullet lists, and careful attention to font and style.

You may decide to create a document that when read online has LINKS to external content. In that case ensure that the links are consistently signposted.

PRESENT your project to the class, keeping your audience interested with pictures, audio- visual additions, and, if possible, an example of the product.

Extra or unusual content will add extraordinariness. For instance, an AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION activity will entertain and add poignancy/humour/understanding to your project.





9. LITERACY/LITERATURE: SKY AS MOUTHPIECE FICTION

Part of the fun of writing fiction comes with imagining our way into the minds of others: this includes serial killers, angry monsters and lonely dragons, nasty liars and slimy cheats, as well as shiny heroes. It also includes writing people who disagree with our personal convictions, and writing them with respect. These characters serve a purpose in fictional texts. Without them there is no story!

Writing about emotional subjects requires developing a temporary emotional distance from the material. This is particularly true when writing fiction. Without such a distance fiction becomes a lecture abounding in research data, generalisations, and personal vilification. It is better to write a strong non-fiction polemic than an attack posing as fiction.

Ondine Sherman on writing Greg the chicken farm manager

"Because meat chickens aren't raised in cages, most people believe this means they have good lives. But there are many welfare issues associated with broiler farming that causes animal suffering. I wanted to seamlessly integrate this information into the narrative. But, it had to be done without the characters sounding like they're quoting Wikipedia – people do not speak that way. This was challenging but also enjoyable. I hope I managed to impart information in a way that sounds natural. When I was writing characters such as Greg (Marissa's father), I didn't want to set them up to be 'baddies' or stereotypes ... Greg is a loving dad. It just happens that his belief system is different to Sky's."

Being a work of fiction, *Sky* must present its characters as 'mouthpieces' for various positions around this social issue. The text must enter into for and against arguments through the behaviour and conversation of its characters. Author Ondine Sherman has used the strategy of the first person POV and in this way quarantines emotion within the character of Sky.

In the first person POV the reader remains within the mind of a character. Creating a character who feels the same as you do is a useful device, avoiding the slippage that can occur in an omniscient POV.

There are two major and three minor expressions regarding animal welfare:

1. **Vegan and distressed:** as Sky is throughout
2. **Omnivorous but concerned:**
""Let's convince Macca's and those big chains to switch to free-range eggs,' Mum had said a year ago. 'We'll start an online petition ... better than nothing, don't you think? ... If you want, we can start another petition for them to add a veggie burger.'" Eleanor in *Sky* p4





3. **Omnivorous and ignorant:**
“‘You like chicken. Don’t you?’ Marissa asks, exchanging a look with Kristy ... ‘You’re not one of those ... hairy-armpit-veggos or something?’” Marissa in *Sky* p64
4. **Omnivorous and in denial:**
‘Animals aren’t like us ... and we must be careful not to attribute human traits to them. That’s called anthro-po-mor-phising.’ Greg in *Sky* p138
5. **Omnivorous and unconcerned:**
“‘Actually,’ I feel my eyes brighten, ‘there’s this amazing South American food truck I used to go to every Saturday, with the best vegan tacos and—’ ‘Tree hugger!’ the rubber-band boy says ...” Andrew in *Sky* p32

These characters each have a position, even if it’s just the common teen position of not being bothered, or thinking people who care about stuff are dorky.

Activity 1: Who’s Seeing What?

1. READ CLOSELY the sections on pages 80-81 and 82-84 in which the text presents both Greg’s and Sky’s experience of the chicken farm.

NOTE and CONSIDER the effects of:

- Greg’s positive ‘spin’
- Greg’s ‘expert’ status, his references to ‘science’
- Greg’s ‘teasing’ of Sky
- Sky’s growing discomfort throughout their interview
- Sky’s physical reactions to the reality of the chicken shed
- Sky’s plain English language use and short paragraphs

DISCUSS briefly the effects on a reader of these textual elements. Which perspective did you trust? Why?

How does the language work to facilitate such trust or mistrust?

2. WRITE one paragraph from the POV of different perspectives within the text. For instance:
 - How do you imagine Chirp sees Sky when she appears in the shed?
 - How do you imagine Greg sees Sky during their interview?

Alternatively WRITE a paragraph in which you imagine characters entering the shed and responding. Paula is hormonal, Marissa is ignorant, Bella is a dog. IMAGINE their responses.





Activity 2: Writing All Round the Centre

1. CHOOSE a social or political concern about which you feel strongly. RESEARCH ONLINE some of the various positions people hold in regards to the concern. You do not need to do a lot of research; just enough to give you an insight into the arguments people use to justify their positions. CREATE three characters that each hold a different position. WRITE a paragraph for each of the characters, as a monologue. REMEMBER that most people believe in their reasoning and their convictions, as you do, so do not write them as people just trying to annoy others.
2. You can then try writing these characters in DIALOGUE with one another.

10. SCIENCE (AS HUMAN ENDEAVOUR): JANE GOODALL & DIAN FOSSEY

Sky's heroes are Jane Goodall & Dian Fossey. Both of these women pioneered a method of ethology, or the study of animal behaviour, that involved long term studies during which they lived closely with their primate subjects. In Africa, Doctor Goodall lived with and studied chimpanzees, and Doctor Fossey with mountain gorillas. They did not observe from a hide, but remained in plain view and built relationships with individual animals and groups. This enabled close study over decades, and set a precedent for the methods of ethology.

Jane Goodall came to Tanzania in East Africa in 1960 as a 26-year-old. She was sent to study its wild chimpanzee population by her mentor Louis Leakey who was working in Oldevai Gorge studying early humans. In 1960 it was scandalous for a woman to not only travel into Africa but to work alone in the jungle, so at first her mother accompanied Doctor Goodall to satisfy the British authorities. She caused quite a stir by almost immediately becoming 'the woman who redefined man'. In October of that first year she observed two chimps stripping leaves off twigs and using them to 'fish' for the termites. Until then scientists had thought that humans were the only animal capable of making and using tools. The common scientific epithet for mankind had been 'the tool maker', but now Louis Leakey responded to Goodall's discovery by writing: 'Now we must redefine tool, redefine man, or accept chimpanzees as humans.'

Dian Fossey, also mentored by Louis Leakey, came to the Congo in 1966 at age 34 to study the wild mountain gorillas. She made a stop at the Gombe Stream Research Centre to meet Jane Goodall and observe her research methods with wild chimpanzees. She then settled in to Kabara in the Virunga Mountains, in a 7ft by 10ft tent, and began a series of treks into the mountains.

At first the gorillas were shy, bolting as soon as Doctor Fossey came near. However, over time she gained their acceptance and then their trust. Doctor Fossey also imitated the gorillas' body language and feeding activities and learnt to copy their vocalizations. Dian Fossey was murdered, hacked to death with machetes while trying to protect the gorillas from an increase in poaching, on December 26, 1985. She wrote a book, *Gorillas in the Mist*, which was made into a film. Her work is continued by a group of dedicated ethologists and students.





Both of these scientists were women, and both were engaged in a new method of study that went against the traditional method. Inevitably their work was controversial. There were a few main objections, mostly focusing on the 'personal' nature of the studies. For instance, Doctor Goodall named the chimpanzees she studied, and recognised them as sentient individuals. At the time, numbering instead of naming animals was thought to stop scientists forming emotional attachments with their subjects. According to this paradigm, emotional attachment threatened scientific objectivity and cast findings into doubt. Noting in her papers that she observed both 'individuality' and 'emotion' in chimpanzees, Doctor Goodall was also accused of anthropomorphism, or 'humanising' animals. Anthropomorphism was (and still often is as Greg points out in *Sky*) considered the worst of ethological crimes.

Activity: Girls' Own Adventures

RESEARCH Doctors Goodall and Fossey in relation to the new method they pioneered along with Louis and Mary Leakey. [\[See Links & Resources at end of document\]](#).

FOCUS on the resistance they encountered, and on the controversy of their new method.

ASK yourself questions and then answer them:

1. What were initial official British responses to Jane Goodall's first excursion into Tanzania?
2. What was the education level of each woman?
3. What was the usual method of studying primates? Who were the leading figures?
4. What was Jane Goodall's methods and practices in studying the chimpanzees? Dian Fossey's method? Did they differ?
5. What were some of the objections raised to Jane Goodall's work? Dian Fossey's work?
6. What were their responses to the objections?
7. Are there still objections within ethology to their method?





11. COOKING & EATING

Vegan food can be delicious and is a healthy way of eating. Many cultures do not eat animal products and some religions, such as Buddhism, proscribe it as a type of Wrong Living or violence. Try a few vegetarian or vegan dishes and see what you think. Here's a recipe for Sky's favourite Sunday breakfast with her mum.

VEGAN PANCAKES

Ingredients

1 x cup flour
1 x tablespoon sugar
2 x tablespoons baking powder 1 x pinch salt
1 x cup soymilk
2 x tbs vegetable oil

Directions

1. Combine the dry ingredients in a bowl.
2. Add soy milk and vegetable oil to your mixture. Mix until smooth.
3. Heat a frying pan and add a little of the vegetable oil.
4. When hot, spoon pancake mixture into the pan.
5. Flip when you see bubbles in the centre of the pancake.
6. Repeat. Serve with lemon and raw sugar, or with bananas, or with your favourite jam... or anything really!

Other vegan recipes to enjoy as part of educational cooking sessions might include veggie burgers, tofu dogs or vegan chocolate cupcakes. [\[See Links & Resources at end of document\]](#).





EXTENDED STUDY/RESOURCES & LINKS

Note: Some websites may be blocked in accordance with your school's safety features for students. You should check the links work before class or find a similar alternative before beginning the activities.

ANIMAL WELFARE

[Voiceless](#) is the author Ondine Sherman's animal protection organisation, which she co-founded with her father in 2004. Voiceless is an independent, non-profit think tank focused on raising awareness of animals suffering in factory farming and the kangaroo industry in Australia. Their vision is for a world in which animals are treated with respect and compassion. Here's a link to pages presenting information about kangaroo hunting and animal farming.

[Framinals](#) is a website for young people full of stories about animals, people who work with animals, good news stories (such as Taiwan banning cat and dog meat) and links to other resources. Learn simple ways to make your school more animal-friendly.

Non-hoax [image of a genetically modified chicken](#) with the same problem standing and walking as Chirp.

[Image](#) of a non-GM 1957 broiler chicken contrasted with a 2005 GM broiler chicken.

A list of interesting facts about chickens from the [one kind planet website](#).

A list of interesting facts about pigs from the [QI team](#).

A list of interesting facts about cows from the [Mother Nature Network website](#).

[Recipe](#) for vegan tofu hot dogs.

[Recipe](#) for vegan chocolate cupcakes.

ONLINE LITERACY

[Teacher Tap](#) is professional resource site (USA) for teachers and librarians managing young people and technology. Find a list of websites making entertaining and/or erroneous claims, for students to practice investigation and fact check skills.

Overview (2012) of [the reliability of Wikipedia](#).

Article: ['Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning'](#) Nov 22, 2016.





PROTEST & ACTIVISM

Interviewing people. This is a link to the [NSW Board of Studies, Teaching Heritage website and its Oral Histories page](#). There's a link to the NSW State Library Oral History Project, which provides handouts and other teaching resources. Learn why Oral Histories are important, and listen to some Indigenous Oral Histories.

[A collection of items](#) about various protests, including logging and mining protests.

An account of the [Australian anti-whaling movement](#) of the 70s.

[Three top documentaries about global poverty](#), streaming online for free at the Borgen project.

Beginnings of the [Sea Shepherd](#) organisation.

A [timeline of overviews of Indigenous Australian experience](#) from 1770 to the present. The second half of the timeline includes protests and activism.

[A collection of stories](#) about the discord over Australia's treatment of refugees and peoples' attempts to change government policy.

GOODALL & FOSSEY

A readable well-constructed biography of Dian Fossey at the [Gorilla Fund International website](#).

A readable well-constructed biography of Jane Goodall at the [Jane Goodall Institute Australia](#).

[Controversies](#) associated with Doctor Goodall's work.

BOOKS

Peter Singer *Animal Liberation* the Bodley Head Ltd, imprint Vintage Publishing 2015 (First published 1975)

Peter Singer & Jim Mason *The Ethics of What We Eat* Text Publishing Company, Melbourne Australia 2007

Jonathan Safran Foer *Eating Animals* Little, Brown & Co, New York USA 2010

Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson

1. When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals Delta Book published by Dell Publishing/Division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Group Inc., New York USA 1996
2. The Pig Who Sang to the Moon: The Emotional World of Farm Animals Vintage Publishing, London UK 2005

Doctors Goodall & Fossey have published widely. Publications include:

1. Jane Goodall *Hope for the Animals and Their World* Icon Books, Duxford UK 2009
2. Dian Fossey *Gorillas in the Mist* Phoenix (imprint of Orion Publishing Co) London UK 2001

Pantera Press book publishers [Sky link](https://www.panterapress.com.au/product/sky/): <https://www.panterapress.com.au/product/sky/>





ENDNOTES

- 1 M J Zuidhof et al., 'Growth, efficiency, and yield of commercial broilers from 1957, 1978, and 2005' (2014) 93(12) Poultry Science 2970, 2973.
- 2 [<https://onekindplanet.org/animal/chicken-domesticated/>]
- 3 [<http://www.mnn.com/earth-matters/animals/stories/20-things-you-didnt-know-about-cows>]
- 4 [<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/the-filter/qi/8912210/QI-Quite-interesting-facts-about-pigs.html>]
- 5 [<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/spin>]
- 6 [<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/euphemism>]
- 7 [<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/authenticity>]
- 8 Article: 'Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning' Nov 22, 2016 - <https://sheg.stanford.edu/upload/V3LessonPlans/Executive%20Summary%2011.21.16.pdf>
- 9 <http://zapatopi.net/afdb/>
- 10 <http://www.ufos-aliens.co.uk/cosmicapollo.html>
- 11 [<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/authenticity>]
- 12 <http://bloginstructions.blogspot.com.au/>

