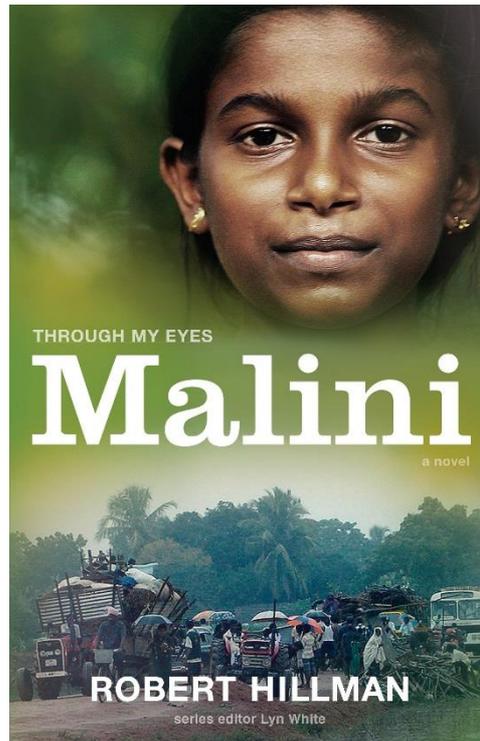


ALLEN & UNWIN

Teaching and Learning Guide

Through My Eyes

Book Five



Malini

Robert Hillman

ISBN 9781743312551

Recommended for ages 11–14 years

The style and structure of these Teaching and Learning Guides was created by Lyn White, Series Editor for Through My Eyes.

Lindsay Williams wrote the specific content of this *Malini* Guide

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The Guide contains numerous links to online resources so we recommend wherever possible you view it on screen. A digital copy is available on the Through My Eyes website www.throughmyeyesbooks.com.au

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Advisory note

There are students in our Australian schools for whom the themes and events depicted in *Malini* will be very familiar and all too real. Such students may well have fled similar conflicts and experienced displacement and trauma. It is important that teachers read the text before sharing it with their class, monitor student reactions and respond appropriately.

1. Guide Overview

This teaching and learning guide presents a range of learning experiences for units of work that promote the development of the knowledge, skills and behaviours designed to extend students' understanding of themselves and the human experience, empowering them to become active global citizens.

This curriculum guide is designed for teachers to use selectively according to their schools' curriculum and student needs. Given the guide's link to numerous online resources, the guide is best used as a digital document.

2. Introduction to *Malini*

Malini is a confronting, but ultimately hopeful, story set in the final stages of the Sri Lankan civil war. Readers will be drawn to the plight of the children and particularly to the dilemmas faced by the main character Malini as she is forced to grow up quickly and take responsibility for her younger sister and a group of orphans. Along the way, she must find her courage and use her intelligence to ensure her own survival as well as the survival of those in her care. This sometimes involves making difficult moral choices.

Although the situations dealt with in the novel have the potential to be frightening, even harrowing, Robert Hillman tells the story of Malini and the other children in an honest, but sensitive manner. The darker parts of the tale are well-balanced with moments of humour and fun, as well as some elegant, evocative description. Through the story of Malini, readers are encouraged to consider issues related to the nature of courage, the devastating effects of religious and cultural intolerance, and our shared humanity. These themes will be explored in section 9.4, below.

In essence, *Malini* is the story of a journey, one with life and death consequences. With twists and turns aplenty, the novel is sure to keep students wanting to turn the pages to find out what happens next.

Malini is an excellent novel for exploring the elements of a successful literary text, as well as providing opportunities to explore the fascinating history, culture and geography of Sri Lanka. Like other books in the series, *Malini* is also a window for students into the effects of war on ordinary people, especially children.

3. Synopsis

It's 2009, and the civil war in Sri Lanka has come to a catastrophic end for the forces of the LTTE (the Tamil Tigers). As the story opens, Malini, a Tamil girl of fourteen, her family, and a great many other Tamil civilians are being herded by Tamil Tiger cadres towards enclaves where they will act as human shields, preventing the government forces from shelling the Tamil soldiers. Malini's father finds an opportunity to thrust a small cloth-wrapped bundle into his daughter's hands, and he tells her to run into the forest and hide with her younger sister, Banni. Malini does as she is told, but before long hears artillery shells exploding. The ruse of the Tamil soldiers hasn't worked; the government forces are shelling the enclave. Malini yearns to be with her parents, but knows she and Banni must stay in the forest. In the bundle she finds her father's mobile phone, and a recharger.

Realising they aren't safe where they are, Malini feels that her only option is to travel to her grandfather's village a long way inland. She knows she will have to keep off the highways, stay alert for government troops and the cadres of the LTTE, who would conscript her, perhaps even compel her to fight. But where will the next meal come from? Where will she and her sister find shelter?

And so begins Malini's odyssey over mountains and rivers, in search of sanctuary. Malini has to ignore her own fears in this role as protector; at fourteen, still partly a child, she is experiencing what many children in conflict zones have to face – taking on the burden of adulthood far too early. But Malini is resourceful and optimistic.

Soon they come across three young children – Nanda, Amal and Gayan – who have been hiding in the forest after the destruction of their orphanage, and they join Malini and Banni. Nanda has some money, which Malini uses to buy food and supplies from a peddler travelling along the road.

The journey throws up trials each day; not only the struggle to find food and shelter, but problems that tax Malini's ingenuity. As they head inland on their journey they have to cross a fast-flowing tributary of a river – Malini decides they will build a crude raft. While the others make it safely across, Malini is hurtled down the river on the raft with the supplies.

Malini comes across an injured child soldier, Kandan, who begs her for help as he is trapped on a rock ledge with no means of escape. Malini helps Kandan and he helps her find her way back to the others, but then they separate as it's too dangerous for Malini's group to travel with Kandan.

By now the mobile phone has run out of battery, so Malini and Banni slip into a town at night hoping to find some way of recharging it. Fleeing from some soldiers who have caught them out after curfew, Malini and Banni find refuge at the house of Randevee, a Sinhalese girl of about Malini's age. Randevee hides them until the soldiers have gone and allows them to recharge the phone.

While Malini and Banni are in the town, the orphans hide at the edge of the forest, but Amal is frightened and runs out onto the road while soldiers are passing. Kandan, who had secretly been following the group, also runs on to the road to provide a distraction for the soldiers. He is shot, and dies.

Malini and Banni return to the orphans. They bury Kandan's body. Malini turns on the phone and finds missed calls from her parents but can't get in touch with them.

The journey resumes. Late one night, with the children asleep, the mobile phone rings. It is Malini's father. She is overjoyed. Her father commends her initiative. He and Malini's mother have escaped the enclave and will attempt to join her in the village.

After further trials Malini and her group reach her grandfather's village. Eventually her parents join them.

4. Author Information and Motivation

Biographical Information

Robert Hillman was born in Melbourne but grew up in rural Victoria. His home town was nestled at the bottom of a weir and he exercised his mind in those days imagining the dam wall bursting and himself the heroic saviour of the townspeople. He first believed he could become a writer after a casual comment by his teacher that his creative writing was very 'fluent'. He told *Good Reading Magazine* that he thought, 'This is what'll I do. I'll write fluently.' However, he first thought of himself as a writer when he was sixteen and 'journeyed the Middle East with a portable typewriter and 50 novels' (*Gold Coaster* online book club).

He has held a number of jobs, the most unusual of which was shoveling sheep's eyeballs into a wheelie bin at a meat market. However, most of his working life has been spent teaching in high

schools and universities. When asked about making the transition to becoming a professional writer, he says ‘the most essential thing is the writing...Once writing has become your fixed star, it is almost impossible to turn your gaze away’ (*Good Reading* magazine).

Hillman has written numerous works of fiction and collaborative non-fiction. His memoir, *Boy in the Green Suit*, won the 2005 Australian National Biography award. *My Life as a Traitor*, written with asylum seeker Zarah Ghahramani, was short-listed for the 2008 Prime Minister’s Literary Award. His collaborative biography, *The Rug-Maker of Mazar-E-Sharif*, is on secondary curricula.

Other novels

- *The Deepest Part of the Lake*
- *The Hour of Disguise*
- *A Life of Days*
- *Sparrow Hill*
- *The Honey Thief*

See <http://www.roberthillmanauthor.com/fiction/> for further details.

Biographies

On his website, Hillman declares that: ‘I write collaborations in the voice of the person whose story is being told’. Books by Hillman of this type include:

- *Gurrumul: His Life and Music*
- *The Boy in the Green Suit*
- *My Life as a Traitor*
- *The Rug-Maker of Mazar-E-Sharif*

See <http://www.roberthillmanauthor.com/biographies/> for further details.

Robert Hillman currently resides in Victoria’s Yarra Valley.

Motivation for Writing

Hillman’s writing is compassionate, intelligent and unafraid of confronting difficult issues. He says he is ‘attracted to writing about the struggle of the marginalized people of the Australian community, especially of refugees and asylum seekers’. While *Malini* is set in Sri Lanka during the final stages of the civil war, Australians are directly (and indirectly) affected by the events of the story: as family and friends of Sri Lankans, as refugees who have fled the war, or as members of a nation asked to provide shelter to those asylum seekers.

A detailed account of Hillman’s motivations is given at the end of *Malini* in the ‘Author’s Note’ (pages 179-182). In summary, he first visited Sri Lanka when he was sixteen, travelling the world

seeking adventure. 'From the deck of the ship,' he says, Colombo, the capital city of what was then known as Ceylon, 'looked like the most thrilling destination on earth.' His next visit was in 2005:

The shocking violence of a civil war that had been raging since 1983 had left a dark cloud of suspicion and resentment hovering over the island. There was still great beauty to be seen in this vivid green land, but wherever I went, I met people who were sorrowing for what had become of Sri Lanka's civil society, and sorrowing, too, for sons and daughters, husbands and wives killed in the fighting. At that time, a truce had been proposed, but I did not meet anyone, Tamil or Sinhalese, who believed for a moment that the war would soon be over. I came across raw hatred and I heard angry denunciations, but more often I encountered sadness and regret.

These stark contrasts of beauty and horror, love and hate infuse the novel, *Malini*. However, in the end, this is a hopeful story:

I have written about wars and the refugees they create in a number of books, but I hadn't written about Sri Lanka until the opportunity came to tell the fictional story of Malini. I wanted to show, in the character of Malini, that courage is not something we either have or don't have, but something that may come to life in our hearts just when the need is greatest. (Malini, page 182)

On his website, Hillman comments of his latest novels, *Joyful* and *Malini*, that he remains 'attracted to hopeless quests, chimeras, characters who are half human, half monster. But also to something quite new: happy endings.'

Further Information about Hillman on the Internet

- Official website: <http://www.roberthillmanauthor.com/fiction/>
- Booking Robert Hillman for a school visit: <http://bookedout.com.au/find-a-speaker/author/robert-hillman/> and <http://bookedout.com.au/?s=through+my+eyes&commit=Search>
- Hillman answers some fun, personal questions: <http://gcbooks.wordpress.com/2010/05/15/author-encounter-with-robert-hillman/>
- This is the text of a question and answer session for *Good Reading* magazine with Robert Hillman and Najaf Mazari. It includes some interesting biographical information about Hillman: <http://www.goodreadingmagazine.com.au/blog/index.cfm/2011/8/9/qa-with-Najaf-Mazari--Robert-Hillman>

- This is the audio of an interview with Robert Hillman and Najaf Mazari about *The Rug-Maker of Mazar-E-Sharif*: <http://www.abc.net.au/local/audio/2008/05/07/2242852.htm>
- If you are a subscriber to AustLit, you can listen to this interview with Robert Hillman and Najaf Mazari about *The Rug-Maker of Mazar-E-Sharif*: <http://www.austlit.edu.au/austlit/page/C692030>
- This is the audio of an interview on the ABC with Robert Hillman and Najaf Mazari about *The Honey Thief*: <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bookshow/the-honey-thief/2933032>

5. UNICEF

A portion of the proceeds (up to \$5000) from sales of this series will be donated to UNICEF.

UNICEF works in over 190 countries to promote and protect the rights of children. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, clean water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation and HIV.

All of UNICEF's work is guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The most internationally recognized treaty on the planet, the CRC sets out the basic rights of children and the obligations of governments to fulfill those rights.

UNICEF's mission is to make sure that the rights of children all over the world are protected and that people under the age of 18 are given special care and protection. UNICEF draws attention to the duties of governments, families, communities and individuals to respect those rights and supports them in doing so.

UNICEF's approach is to use low-cost, highly effective solutions that work to dramatically improve children's lives. UNICEF is funded by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.

UNICEF is non-political and provides aid to children on a non-discriminatory basis based on need and has no religious, racial or political affiliations.

UNICEF is active in all of the countries represented in the Through My Eyes series and links have been provided in this guide to some of their excellent resources that support the suggested teaching and learning activities.

To learn more about UNICEF's work and school programs go to <http://www.unicef.org.au>.

6. Curriculum Use

6.1 Australian Curriculum

This guide is designed for use with upper primary and lower secondary students in years 5 - 8 of the Australian Curriculum. *Malini* is a unique literary text that has:

...personal, cultural, social and aesthetic value...and (has) potential for enriching the lives of students, expanding the scope of their experience.

(Content structure, literature, Australian Curriculum: English)

Malini can be studied as a class text or used as a literary focus for integrated studies units. *Malini* is also extremely suitable for use in Literature circles. The Primary English Teaching Association of Australia (PETAA) provides a useful introduction to this reading strategy at

http://issuu.com/petaa/docs/pen_1404_5. Some excellent practical suggestions on strategy

implementation are available at: <http://www.abcteach.com/search.php?q=literature+circle> and

<http://www.litcircles.org/Overview/overview.html>.

The primary focus of these teaching and learning activities is engagement with the English learning area with its three interrelated strands:

- Language: knowing about the English language
- Literature: understanding, appreciating, responding to, analysing and creating literature
- Literacy: expanding the repertoire of English usage.

The selection of teaching and learning activities has been guided by Year level Content descriptions for the following Strands and sub-strands:

Language	Literature	Literature
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Language for interaction• Text structure and organisation• Expressing and developing ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Literature and context• Responding to literature• Examining literature• Creating literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Texts in context• Interacting with others• Interpreting, analysing and evaluating• Creating texts

Activities in this guide also support the focuses of the threads within the sub-strands of Literature and context, Responding to literature, Examining literature and Creating literature:

AusVELS

Teachers of AusVELS will appreciate the compatibility of this guide with the Physical, Personal and Social Learning and the Interdisciplinary Learning strands and in particular, its relevance to the following Domains:

Civics and Citizenship

They (the students) consider human rights and social justice issues at local, national and global levels. (Civics and Citizenship, Overview, AusVELS: Physical, Personal and Social Learning)

Interpersonal development

They (the students) participate in activities which enable them to identify the differing values and beliefs held by individuals in local, national and global contexts and reflect on the impact these may have on relationships. (Learning focus Level 7, AusVELS: Interpersonal development)

Information and Communications Technology

As students work towards the achievement of Level 8 standards in Information and Communications Technology, they learn to use a variety of ICT tools and techniques to assist with filtering, classifying, representing, describing and organising ideas, concepts and issues. (Level 8 Information and Communications Technology, Learning focus, AusVELS)

Thinking Processes

At Level 6, students use a broad range of thinking processes and tools, and reflect on and evaluate their effectiveness. They articulate their thinking processes. They document changes in their ideas and beliefs over time. (Thinking Processes, Standards, Level 6 AusVELS)

<http://ausvels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/>

6.2 Global Education

These teaching and learning activities support exploration of key themes in global education including:

- Identity and cultural diversity
- Social justice and human rights
- Peace building and conflict resolution
- Civics and citizenship
- Values education

For more information on Global Education see: www.globaleducation.edu.au.

6.3 International Baccalaureate

Schools adopting the International Baccalaureate will find *Malini* a valuable literary resource for the exploration of the six transdisciplinary themes of global significance, having particular relevance to Human Rights and Peace and Conflict units of study.

7. Background Information for Teachers

Note

For convenience and simplicity, Sri Lanka is used as the name for the island throughout these notes. However, this name did not actually apply to the island until 1972.

7.1 Sri Lanka: Overview

Sri Lanka is a relatively small island nation in the Indian Ocean just off the southern tip of the Indian mainland. Probably best known in recent years for its tea plantations, it is also a land of natural beauty, a green teardrop close to the equator with eight UNESCO World Heritage sites. However, from about 1983 through to 2009 it was also the location of a vicious civil war that tore the nation apart and has resulted in a decision by the United Nations to investigate claims of war crimes by the Sri Lankan state and Tamil forces.

What follows is a very brief summary of Sri Lankan history. Further details on this fascinating subject can be found in the ‘Author’s Note’ in *Malini* and in the other resources listed under ‘Further Information’, below.

7.1.1 Early History

The original inhabitants of the island were the Veddahs who are believed to have migrated from India/South East Asia around 32 000 BC. It is no doubt the Veddhas that are referred to on page 98 of the novel:

The first people of Sri Lanka, thought Malini. And she asked herself: Did these first people fight each other? Did they make wars? Probably. In a world so rich in beauty, people still made wars on each other; people made ugliness. It baffled her.

In the third century BC, Buddhism arrived on the island and Sinhalese culture arose. Strong ties developed between royalty and Buddhism and these ties remain an important factor in recent events. In 371 AD, a relic of the Buddha was brought to the island and this reinforced the power of

Buddhism on the island. During this time, battles were fought with the Tamil Cholas from southern India and eventually in about the 1200s, the Sinhalese basically abandoned the northern part of the island, leaving it for the Tamils and their religion, Hinduism.

7.1.2 European Colonisation

In 1505, European colonisation began with the arrival of the Portuguese. The Dutch arrived in 1602. These invasions were related to the chase for spices which formed an important and extremely lucrative part of European trade and commerce. In return for a monopoly on the spice trade, the Dutch granted the Sri Lankans autonomy. However, for reasons that won't be dealt with here, the Dutch ceded the island to Britain. In 1802, it became a British colony and in the 1830s, British settlers started arriving, an event that unsettled the Sinhalese. From the 1870s, rubber and coffee plantations were largely replaced by tea and a large number of Tamils were brought in from India as labourers. This caused a great deal of flux in the demographics of the island. On both sides, though, discontent with the British grew. Under pressure, the British brought in a number of governmental reforms, including a constitution that ensured no one ethnic group could have dominance over another. Unfortunately, Sinhalese and Tamil leaders failed to fully support this constitution. Finally, on February 4 1948, Sri Lanka gained independence.

7.1.3 Tamil-Sinhalese Civil War

With independence, simmering resentment of the Tamils amongst the Sinhalese grew. When the Sri Lankan Freedom Party came to power in 1956, laws favouring the Sinhalese were passed, including a bill that resulted in Tamils losing access to government jobs and services. In 1970, a new law meant that Sinhalese were favoured for positions at universities and in 1972 Sinhalese was made the official language of Sri Lanka. Needless to say, Tamils were dissatisfied; an era of armed resistance and insurrection began, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE or Tamil Tigers) was formed. Then, in 1983 during the Black July riots, between 3000 and 4000 Tamils were slaughtered in retaliation for the killing of 13 Sinhalese soldiers by Tamil Tigers. Despite sporadic attempts at peace, a full scale civil war ensured, lasting nearly 25 years and resulting in approximately 100 000 lives lost. Claims of atrocities have been levelled against both sides, including the bombing of civilians by the state and the use of child soldiers and human shields by the Tamil Tigers.

In May 2009, the war finally came to an end, followed by a difficult period of rebuilding and reconciliation that still continued when *Malini* was first published in 2014. Today, according to the CIA's *World Factbook*, the population is: Sinhalese 73.8%, Sri Lankan Moors 7.2%, Indian Tamil 4.6%, and Sri Lankan Tamil 3.9%.

And what of the future? Robert Hillman ends his novel on a hopeful note, but recounts in the 'Author's Note':

I recall particularly two comments from my last visit to the island in 2005. The first is that of a young man I questioned about his views on the war. He said, 'Tamils do not belong in Sri Lanka. India is their home. They should leave.' The second is the voice of a much older man, a shop owner in Colombo. 'Robert, what can I say to you about this war? I can say this: heaven forgive all of us. All.'

7.2 Further Information

The summary above has been greatly simplified for reasons of space. Robert Hillman provides a longer summary of events relevant to the novel on pages 179–182 in his 'Author's Note'. There is also a timeline of key events related to the civil war on pages 183–189 of the novel.

In addition, listed below are a number of websites (and other resources) from which further information about various aspects of Sri Lanka and the civil war may be obtained. While these have been previewed for the writing of these notes, it is highly recommended that teachers also personally preview these resources very carefully to evaluate suitability for the students in their classes.

Facts about Sri Lanka

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/561906/>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11999611>

<http://travel.nationalgeographic.com.au/travel/countries/sri-lanka-facts/>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ce.html>

<http://www.globaleducation.edu.au/2384.html>

<http://www.infolanka.com/photo/>

Hoffmann, Sara E. *Sri Lanka in Pictures*, Twenty-First Century Books, Minneapolis, 2006

Timelines and History

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12004081>

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/the-history-of-sri-lanka-1.776957>

<http://sri-lanka.theglobalmail.org/timeline>

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/sri-lanka/history>

http://asianhistory.about.com/od/Sri_Lanka/p/Sri-Lanka-Facts-and-History.htm [Useful if you are looking for something much briefer.]

Geography and Features of Interest

<http://www.roughguides.com/destinations/asia/sri-lanka/explore/>

<http://www.srilanka360.org> [VR tour – be a little patient and you will be well rewarded.]

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_D5Ie6pOrSo [Beautiful video of Sri Lanka from the air.]

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqi-QuuVbbs> [Travel documentary that includes some history and culture.]

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o75KfyAp98o> [HD documentary; 42 mins]

Travelling in Sri Lanka

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/sri-lanka>

<http://www.roughguides.com/destinations/asia/sri-lanka/>

Sri Lankan News

<http://www.infolanka.com/news/>

<http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/srilanka.htm> [Useful because it tells you the language in which the news is published.]

Conflict in Sri Lanka

<http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/sri-lanka/conflict-profile/#52>

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/may/18/sri-lanka-conflict>

Children and Sri Lankan conflict

<http://www.irinnews.org/report/82991/sri-lankachildren-suffering-the-most-in-conflict-unicef>

<http://www.irinnews.org/report/82529/sri-lanka-unicef-urges-tigers-to-ensure-freemovement-out-of-conflict-areas>

http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/sri_lanka_41670.html

Walters, Eric & Adrian Bradbury, *When Elephants Fight: The Lives of Children in Conflict in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Uganda*, Orca Book Publishers, Victoria, 2008

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/05/18/sri.lanka.conflict.explainer/index.html?iref=24hours>

Child Soldiers in Sri Lanka

http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/sri_lanka_48286.html

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sOA0IjVL_NU

<http://www.unicef.org.au/Discover/News/March-2012/Child-Soldiers.aspx> [This site deals with child soldiers generally.]

Rehabilitation of Child Soldiers in Sri Lanka

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=moC4MN7g63I>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5dnzoTPk8sw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1W31cQ2pmiU>



Map sourced from Google Maps:

<https://www.google.com.au/maps/place/Sri+Lanka/@7.8775394,80.7003428,8z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m2!3m1!1s0x3ae2593cf65a1e9d:0xe13da4b400e2d38c>

8. Pre-reading Activities

8.1 Examining the Cover and Extra Text Features

Visual Grammar: describe how the picture elements and design of the cover combine to create meaning and context.

- The composition of the images
- Gaze (where the subjects are looking)
- The use of shot types
- The colours in the images
- Horizontal and vertical angle?
- Depth of field (focus)
- Words/language

[Appendix 1](#) contains a retrieval chart that can be used when analysing the cover and [Appendix 2](#) contains possible answers. For detailed information on interpreting (and creating) images, see *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (available from e.g., <http://www.amazon.com/Reading-Images-Grammar-Visual-Design/dp/0415319153>).

Once students have studied the cover carefully, they should be guided to make predictions about the text they will be reading:

- What sort of text do you expect this to be, e.g., a report, recipe, story, poem, history, exposition, something else? What do you predict is its purpose, e.g., to inform, to instruct, to entertain, to argue a point of view and persuade, something else?
- What might happen in this book? Where might the events in the book be located?
- What do you know about the author? (Teachers might want to refer students to Robert Hillman's website provided earlier.) What sort of books is he known for writing?
- Who do you think is the intended audience for this book? (Students might find it useful to read a bit more about the 'Through My Eyes' series: <http://www.throughmyeyesbooks.com.au>)
- Do you expect this book to use mainly writing, images/pictures, speaking, sound, hyperlinks or some combination of these?
- What sort of structure and language features do you predict? Do you think you might have any problems understanding the book? If so, what? How could

these problems be alleviated/reduced?

Note: Although editorial style includes explanation in the text of the Tamil words used, students' attention should be drawn to the glossary at the back of the novel.

Sample reference to the Australian Curriculum: English:

Use prior knowledge and [text processing strategies](#) to interpret a range of [types of texts](#) (ACELY1722)

Understand and explain how combinations of words and images in texts are used to represent particular groups in society, and how texts position readers in relation to those groups (ACELT1628)

8.2 Finding Out About Sri Lanka

- Ask students to complete the first two columns of a KWL before they begin the novel: What do they KNOW about Sri Lanka? What do they WANT (or need) to know? Once they have completed a study of the novel, students can return to the KWL chart and complete the final column: What have I LEARNT about Sri Lanka and the civil war there from reading this novel? For more information on the KWL activity, see <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/printouts/chart-a-30226.html>.
- Using Google maps (or something similar), students should locate Sri Lanka in relation to other countries, e.g., India, Australia etc. View various versions of a Sri Lankan map, including terrain and satellite views to gain an idea of the geography of the country. Using the map at the beginning of the novel, students should focus their attention on the area through which Malini and the other children travel during the novel.
Note: Although Katheraveli is a real town, other towns and villages named on Malini's route (i.e. Ankapur, her home town of Satham, and her grandfather's home of Ulla Alakana) are fictional.
- The landscape of Sri Lanka plays an important role in the story of Malini. The beauty of the country is contrasted with the ugliness of the civil war. At one point, Malini comments: 'In a world so rich in beauty, people still made wars on each other; people made ugliness. It baffled her.' (page 98) To get a sense of the beauty referred to, students should view some videos or VR tours of Sri Lanka that are available on the internet – a list of these is provided above (see '[Geography and Features of Interest](#)'). A couple of particularly good sites for this

purpose would be:

- <http://www.srilanka360.org> [VR tour – be a little patient and you will be well rewarded.]
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5le6pOrSo> [Beautiful video of Sri Lanka from the air.]
- As an extension, students could create a series of postcards highlighting some of the points of special interest in Sri Lanka.

8.3 Inquiry Learning

‘The students are both problem posers and problem solvers within inquiry learning. Inquiry Learning encourages learners to examine the complexity of the world and form concepts and generalizations instead of being told simple answers to complex problems.’ (Jeni Wilson and Kath Murdoch):

http://resourcebank.sitc.co.uk/Resources/Priority2/2Noumea/NoPr_T006inquiryLearning.pdf

Before reading the book, students can work in groups to research various aspects of the novel with which they might be unfamiliar. The websites provided earlier will provide a good starting point for this work; teachers are strongly advised to preview all websites used for research and limit students to those pre-selected by the teacher. The inquiry questions below are suggestions only and would need to be chosen or adapted to suit the age and ability of the students.

- **Early history of Sri Lanka.** Were the Sinhalese and Tamils the first inhabitants of Sri Lanka? If not, who was and what evidence have they left behind? What do we know about them, e.g., their daily life, their beliefs and stories? [It might seem strange going so far back in history, but during the novel Malini stumbles across paintings and designs on the sides of a cave: ‘The first people of Sri Lanka, thought Malini. And she asked herself: Did these first people fight each other? Did they make wars?’ In addition, there is a myth from this time that seems to suggest that the Sinhalese and Tamils share a common ancestry – see, for example, <http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2008/07/13/jun02.asp> or <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/sri-lanka/history#ixzz37LN5XFMj>]
- **The Portuguese and British in Sri Lanka.** What is colonisation? When did the Portuguese arrive in Sri Lanka and why were they interested in the island? When and why did they eventually leave? What brought the British to Sri Lanka and why? How did they treat the inhabitants of the island? What caused the British to grant independence to Sri Lanka? Has Sri Lanka always been known by the

current name? If not, when did this change and why?

- **Roots of the Sinhalese and Tamils.** Who are the Sinhalese and Tamils? Were they always fighting? What are the roots of the conflict between these two groups? What part was played by Portuguese and British colonisation?
- **The use of child soldiers in conflicts.** What are 'child soldiers' and how are children (both boys and girls) 'recruited'? What part did they play in the Sri Lankan civil war? What are the effects of fighting and what sort of rehabilitation is required when the wars finish?
- **Religion in Sri Lanka.** What are the main beliefs of Buddhists? What special things do Theravada Buddhists (as practiced by the Sinhalese) believe? How are these beliefs similar or different from Hinduism (as practiced by the Tamils)? Are these the only religions on the island?

The results of the students' research could be presented as a Glogster poster: see <http://edu.glogster.com/what-is-glogster-edu>. Other presentation tools include Prezi <http://prezi.com/index/7/>; Educlipper <https://educlipper.net/main.html>; Mac users could use Keynote <http://www.apple.com/au/ios/keynote/?cid=wwa-au-kwg-features-com>

Scoop .it! allows students to cut and paste from online articles and add their own comments <http://www.scoop.it/>.

A guide to using Padlet in the classroom is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuzciL8qCYM>.

Sample reference to the Australian Curriculum: English:

Use a range of software including word processing programs with fluency to construct, edit and publish written text, and select, edit and place visual, print and audio elements (ACELY1707)

Use comprehension strategies to interpret and evaluate the texts students found in their research by reflecting on the validity of content and the credibility of sources, including finding evidence in the text for the author's point of view (ACELY1734)

9. Literature

9.1 Reading

9.1.1 Strategies to enhance the reading of the the text

After completing some of the pre-reading activities, students can begin reading the novel. For accomplished readers, the book is likely to pose few problems for independent reading. However, it would be useful to draw their attention to features of the novel that might further help with unfamiliar ideas and Sri Lankan words, e.g.:

- The map at the beginning of the book
- p190–191 for a glossary of Sinhalese and Tamil words
- p179–182 for further background to the civil war in the Author’s Note
- p183–189 for a timeline of the civil war.

In addition, the novel is fairly short and would be ideal for reading aloud by the teacher or accomplished student readers. For the latter, the novel really lends itself to Readers Theatre (see for example <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/readers-theatre-172.html?tab=1#tabs>). Consideration could also be given to using a literature circle (see for example <http://www.insideadog.com.au/teachers/literature-circles>)

Sample reference to the Australian Curriculum: English:

Use interaction skills, varying conventions of spoken interactions such as [voice](#) volume, tone, pitch and pace, according to group size, formality of interaction and needs and expertise of the [audience](#) (ACELY1816)

9.2 Literature and Context

9.2.1 Getting Started: Reading the First Chapter

The first chapter of a novel is the orientation to the story, its main characters, and the setting (in time and place). Read Chapter 1 of *Malini* and then students can:

- List what they find out about: Malini (e.g., from the description of her bedroom on page 6), Banni, her mother and father, Sri Lanka, the civil war (e.g., pages 3–4), the impact of British colonisation (e.g., the first paragraph of page 1 and page 6 in the description of Malini’s room), the setting/environment.
- Discuss the significance of the story beginning with the Tamil commander coming

to Malini's school to address the students.

- Sketch and then discuss what they think is the most important moment in Chapter 1 and/or sketch the main characters (perhaps one character per group). See instructions for 'sketch to stretch' to develop this idea further: <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/guided-comprehension-visualizing-using-229.html?tab=1#tabs>. *Note:* This same activity could also be used for other key moments in the story.
- Discuss how readers are invited to think about the war and, in particular, the Tamil soldiers by the end of this chapter.
- Invite students to list words and phrases in this chapter that indicate setting, evidence of conflict and clues to character identities as suggested in the table below.

CULTURE	CONFLICT	CHARACTERS
Tamil – Hindu / Sinhalese – Buddhist; Household shrines to Hindu gods; Traditional Tamil costume	Compulsory recruitment of boy 'soldiers'; Sinhalese/Tamil civil war; Appa refers to 'total war'; 'fanatical...madmen'	Malini Malini's father – 'appa' Malini's mother – 'amma' Banni

Sample reference to the Australian Curriculum: English:

Recognise and explain differing viewpoints about the world, cultures, individual people and concerns represented in texts (ACELT1807)

9.3 Responding to the text

These sample curriculum references inform the activities found in section 9.4, below.

Students learn to identify personal ideas, experiences and opinions about literary texts and discuss them with others. They learn how to recognise areas of agreement and difference, and how to develop and refine their interpretations through discussion and argument.

(Content Structure, The Australian Curriculum: English, ACARA)

Participate in and contribute to discussions, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, sharing and evaluating information, experiences and opinions (ACELY1709)

Reflect on ideas and opinions about characters, settings and events in literary texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others and justifying a point of view (ACELT1620)

Recognise and explain differing viewpoints about the world, cultures, individual people and concerns represented in texts (ACELT1807)

9.4 Analysing and Responding –Themes

9.4.1 Finding courage and maturity

PART A: In the ‘Author’s Note’ (p182), Robert Hillman says:

I have written about wars and the refugees they create in a number of books, but I hadn’t written about Sri Lanka until the opportunity came to tell the fictional story of Malini. I wanted to show, in the character of Malini, that courage is not something we either have or don’t have, but something that may come to life in our hearts just when the need is greatest.

As you read the book, trace the fluctuations in Malini’s courage: sometimes she shows great courage and sometimes she struggles to believe that she has the strength or courage to fulfill her father’s instructions to get herself and Banni to their Appappa’s house. Re-read the following pages: 17, 18, 19, 21–22, 30, 36, 79, 105, 140–141, 145, 152–153, 162–163, 174.

In groups, students can discuss:

- How would you define courage?
- Are Malini’s actions courageous?
- How do you think you would react in a similar situation?
- Have you ever been in a situation that required some courage? Do you know someone else who has displayed courage? What other characters in the novel demonstrate courage, for example Kandan’s actions on page 131?
- Was Hillman successful in showing ‘that courage is not something we either have or don’t have, but something that may come to life in our hearts just when the need is greatest’? Do you agree with this idea?

Students could then be asked to write one of the following:

- a letter nominating Malini or Kandan for a bravery award.
- a diary entry in which Malini reflects on the journey to her appappa’s house and

her own personal growth

- a report for a newspaper of Kandan's death or an obituary reflecting on his short life. As well as reading the actual death scene, re-read pages 135–136 and 176–177 for inspiration.

Sample Reference to the Australian Curriculum: English:

Identify and explore ideas and viewpoints about events, issues and characters

represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts

(ACELT1619)

PART B: As Malini struggles with the need to show courage in the face of adversity, her sister, Banni, embarks on her own journey of personal growth as she is forced to grow up quickly. As a comparison to Malini, trace Banni's growth in maturity and Malini's growing appreciation of her sister – see pages 22–25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33, 38, 39, 108, 110, 111, 148–149, 156, 173.

Discuss the following in groups

- At the beginning of the journey, is Malini's exasperation with Banni justified?
- What evidence is there that Banni is starting to grow up?
- Is it fair that Banni is forced to grow up in this way? Has she been robbed of her childhood? Is she a better person by the end of the story?
- Are children born in Australia forced to grow before they have to? Are Australian children too spoiled?
- Compare Banni's life with that of Nanda. Read Nanda's story about her own life and that of the boys on pages 50–55.
- Students can discuss their understanding of the following extract from page 43:
Malini said nothing for a minute or more. 'Banni, in a war there are no children. There are only those who die and those who live.'

Students can be asked to:

- work in groups and complete character maps for students based on how they are represented at the beginning of the novel, towards the middle, and at the end when they have finally reached their Appappa's home. See http://www.educationoasis.com/curriculum/GO/GO_pdf/character_map.pdf for a possible template. See a slightly different version here: http://vashonsd.org/hello/images/Character_Development_Chart.pdf.
- participate in a hot seat roleplay in which students take on the roles of Malini and

Banni and answer questions. For further information, see <http://dramaresource.com/strategies/hot-seating> or, for a more elaborated version of the activity, <http://www.education.com/reference/article/comprehension-building-activity/>.

- imagine that, through a global classroom project, they have connected with a class in Sri Lanka. They are assigned Banni (or one of the other children) as a 'pen friend' and have been told her story in an email from Banni. They should reply to the email reflecting on their childhood in Australia and share their reactions to Banni's story and the growth she shows through the events of the novel.

Sample references to the Australian Curriculum: English:

Participate in and contribute to discussions, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, sharing and evaluating information, experiences and opinions (ACELY1709)

Make connections between students' own experiences and those of characters and events represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1613)

Students learn to identify personal ideas, experiences and opinions about literary texts and discuss them with others. They learn how to recognise areas of agreement and difference, and how to develop and refine their interpretations through discussion and argument.

(Content Structure, The Australian Curriculum: English, ACARA)

Reflect on ideas and opinions about characters, settings and events in literary texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others and justifying a point of view (ACELT1620)

Recognise and explain differing viewpoints about the world, cultures, individual people and concerns represented in texts (ACELT1807)

9.4.2 Shared humanity

Malini's family are Tamils and Nanda and the boys are Sinhalese. Find and discuss evidence of the ways in which Malini and Nanda's daily lives are influenced by their faith. e.g., pages 61, 69, 138–139 and 162.

Although there are differences between the two faiths, Hillman offers us examples that demonstrate that religions do not need to be inflexible and cause dispute and disharmony; they can offer possibilities for harmony and acceptance. Read, for example, pages 69–70, 124–125 and 126–127.

In groups, discuss:

- Why do you think the author made the decision that Malini and Banni should assist Nanda, Gayan and Amal? Are the children really that different from each other? What do they have in common? Refer to pages such as 44, 47 and 102. Using a Venn Diagram (see http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/venn_diagrams/) show similarities and differences.
- What examples in the text are there of the children receiving help from people who ignore religious differences?
- What evidence is there that religious differences can still create tension and conflict?

To consolidate the ideas raised during the discussion above:

- Listen to John Lennon’s song, “Imagine” or watch a video of the song. Also listen to and discuss (extracts from) speeches encouraging acceptance and equality, e.g.:
 - Martin Luther’s ‘I have a dream’ speech
 - Malala Yousufzai’s speech to a special assembly of young education activists at the United Nations. Malala was shot by the Taliban for standing up for the education of girls. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRh_30C8l6Y For an edited version: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/10/malala-faith-islam-next-generation_n_4072645.html **[Preview before class: site may contain unsuitable extras.]** The text is available at: <https://secure.aworldatschool.org/page/content/the-text-of-malala-yousafzais-speech-at-the-united-nations/>
- Read *Mirror* by Jeannie Baker (see ‘Further Reading’ below), a book that tries to emphasise our shared humanity. Using the novel (and other research completed earlier) to guide them, students can produce their own version of *Mirror*, comparing Malini and Banni’s family life in Satham or Ulla Alakana with their own lives in Australia. Given that students may come from very diverse backgrounds and home lives, ensure they have the opportunity to share and celebrate their final products.
- Encourage students to plan and get involved in Harmony Day activities in March.

See <http://www.harmony.gov.au> and <http://www.harmony.gov.au/schools/> for more details. If March is not close, students can hold their own Harmony Day on any day of the year!

- Students could organise for their school to join UNICEF's Day for Children: <http://www.unicef.org.au/Educational-Resources/What-can-you-do-to-help/Day-for-Children.aspx> or start a UNICEF school club:
- <http://www.unicef.org.au/Educational-Resources/What-can-you-do-to-help/Start-a-UNICEF-Club.aspx>

Sample reference to the Australian Curriculum: English:

Explore and reflect on personal understanding of the world and significant human experience gained from interpreting various representations of life matters in texts (ACELT1635)

Make connections between students' own experiences and those of characters and events represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1613)

Recognise and explain differing viewpoints about the world, cultures, individual people and concerns represented in texts (ACELT1807)

9.4.3 Rights of Children

Children's rights are severely affected by war and conflict. Exploring and examining the rights of children will enable students to better appreciate the characters' lives in *Malini*.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted in 1989 by the United Nations General Assembly is the most widely accepted human rights treaty in history. In simple terms it states that every child has:

- the right to a childhood, which includes protection from harm and exploitation
- the right to be educated, including all girls and boys completing primary school
- the right to be healthy through access to clean water, nutritious food and medical care
- the right to be treated fairly, including having laws and practices changed that are unfair on children
- the right to be heard on issues that affect them, and have these views considered by those with the power to make decisions.

UNICEF estimates there are 158 million children between the ages of five and fourteen who are involved in child labour, one in six of the world's children. Over 64 million women aged 20–24 years are married or in union before the age of 18 as a result of arranged or forced marriages and approximately 300,000 children are involved in conflicts, many as child soldiers.

<http://www.childinfo.org/>

<http://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/childsoldiers.pdf>

UNICEF Australia has produced an excellent middle school unit on the Rights of Children and their photo essays are a wonderful way to introduce the topic of children's rights. Child-friendly versions of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) can be used as a starting point for exploration of this theme.

<http://www.unicef.org.au/Discover/Issues-facing-children/Convention-on-the-Rights-of-the-Child/Child-Rights.aspx>

<http://www.unicef.org.au/downloads/Education/Photo-stories/What-are-rights.aspx>

<http://www.unicef.org.au/Educational-Resources/Parents-Teachers-Educators/Parents/Talk-to-your-children-about-rights-and-responsibilities.aspx>

Other UNICEF resources can be found at <http://www.unicef.org.au/educational-Resources>

Everyone – We Are All Born Free: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Pictures published in association with Amnesty International is another excellent resource for this topic.

Global Education's website has a very helpful teaching and learning unit on the global issue of human rights:

<http://www.globaleducation.edu.au/global-issues/gi-human-rights.html>.

- Watch YouTube clip: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9_lvXFEyJo.
- What are rights? What are the rights of children in the 21st century?
- Students use sticky notes to jot down responses to these questions using just one or two words and add to class chart. Alternatively, this may be done with IWB tools. Compare the resulting list with UNICEF's child-friendly version of the rights of children.
- Students visually rank the rights of children using a visual ranking tool found at <http://www.intel.com/content/www/us/en/education/k12/thinking-tools/visual-ranking.html>.
- Read UNICEF publication: *A life like mine: How children live around the world* and discuss similarities and differences between how children's rights are being met around the world.

- Students create persuasive posters for one of the rights from their list using forceful language and symbolism. See examples on UNICEF site: <http://pinterest.com/unicefaustralia/posters-and-infographics/>.
- Students write a reflective text on how they could make the world a fairer, safer place for children.
- Register your school for the UNICEF DAY FOR CHILDREN.

Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations selecting and sequencing appropriate content and multimodal elements for defined audiences and purposes, making appropriate choices for modality and emphasis (ACELY1710)

- Using digital media software such as Comic Life and iMovie create a cartoon or short film about child rights. UNICEF's photoessays could be used as a model www.unicef.org/photoessays/30048.html Consider audience: young children, teaching staff, school council.
- Using GarageBand or Audacity, students create a podcast using audio files, images and movies that summarise their learning about child rights and upload to a suitable podcast site. Look at podcast in education resources on FUSE <http://www.poducateme.com>.
- Prepare an oral speech: What does it mean to be a global citizen?

Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations, selecting and sequencing appropriate content, including multimodal elements, to reflect a diversity of viewpoints (ACELY1731)

9.4.4 The ethics of war

Hillman shows readers some of the terrible things that happen during war – read, for example, pages 8 ('No, Daughter, not this year... It will be horrible.');

pages 11 to 15 (when the Tamils force the inhabitants of Satham to act as human shields); and page 175–176 'With the country in the state it – was... in the Panya's living room' about the final days and aftermath of the war.

However, the tragedy of war is brought home to the reader through a more personal story, that of Kandan. Re-read pages 88 and 98–99. In groups, students can discuss:

- How does Hillman encourage us to feel sympathy for Kandan? (See pages 95–97 in particular.)
 - Kandan telling his own story – change of perspective
 - use of contrasts, e.g., *I did not want to be a soldier, but I had no choice...I did not want to die. I want to see my mother and father*

again...I thought surely I would die here, but then you came.

- emphasising Kandan's child-like innocence, e.g., association with rabbits; crying; reaction of Malini (patted Kandan on the cheek, as a mother would)
- Re-read pages 103–104 when Malini tells Kandan that he cannot come with them. Does she make the correct decision, especially given what happens on page 131? *Extension:* Try debating this question using the Spar Debate process (<http://www.idebate.org/training/teaching-tools/spar-debates>).

Sample reference to the Australian Curriculum: English:

Reflect on ideas and opinions about characters, settings and events in literary texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others and justifying a [point of view](#) (ACELT1620)

Compare the ways that language and images are used to create character, and to influence emotions and opinions in different types of texts (ACELT1621) The value of small actions

9.4.5 The value of small actions

Although the events of the Sri Lankan civil war as portrayed in *Malini* have some tragic consequences, there is also cause for hope and optimism. For example, along the journey, Malini and the other children encounter wisdom and kindness in unexpected places. Re-read pages 31–36, 144, 145, 147. Then, at the end of the novel, when the civil war is finished, the country is in some chaos. Rather than being overwhelmed, Malini sets up a makeshift classroom for children:

For the broken society outside the classroom, there was nothing she could do. Remaking a country is too big a task for one person, or even for a thousand. It is a task for millions. One thing that could be achieved, though, was to remember Kandan in some special way. (page 176)

Re-read page 176 (from ‘Malini and her father regained their strength...’) to 178 to remind students how the re-united family tries to rebuild their world.

In groups, students can:

- recount times when people were kind to them or they were kind to someone else.
- brainstorm small actions they could take to make their own school or community a better place. For inspiration, visit the following websites:
 - the Pay it Forward website (<http://payitforwardday.com/about/how-does-it-work/>) and, perhaps, view excerpts from the Hollywood film

(<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0223897/>)

- <http://www.redcross.org.au/kids-teaching-community-to-be-prepared.aspx>.
- For possible contributions to the wider world, check out the following websites as a starting point:
 - <http://www.unicef.org.au/Educational-Resources/Students.aspx>
 - <http://www.amnesty.org.au>
 - <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/g/vol.php>
 - <http://www.redcross.org.au/young-humanitarians.aspx>
 - <http://www.greenpeace.org/australia/en/>
- create a short, animated or video presentation (e.g., using Videoscribe, iMovie, the iSupr8 app etc.) to encourage others to join them in some form of social action. These could be presented on assembly. Alternatively, create a whole campaign for change involving t-shirts, posters, social media, events and so on. Here's a good starting point for ideas: <http://www.rock-your-world.org/curriculum/take-actions/developing-campaigns>.

Sample reference to the Australian Curriculum: English:

*Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, selecting aspects of **subject** matter and particular language, visual, and audio features to convey information and ideas (ACELY1725)*

9.5 Examining Literature

9.5.1 The Journey

The novel is in essence an old-style 'on-the-road' or journey story. Of course, there is both a physical journey and an emotional or psychological journey that the characters must take.

- With the help of the map in the front of the novel or Google maps, create a more detailed map of the journey the children take. This can include annotations (e.g., noting key events, weather conditions, the emotional state of the main characters at that point of the journey) and, where possible, images or sketches of the changing landscape they are travelling through (e.g., a photo of the Mahaweli Ganga can be found here: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/358033/Mahaweli-Ganga>). For something a little more elaborate, students could create a 'Lit Trip', see for example <http://www.googlelittrips.com/GoogleLit/Home.html> and <https://tourbuilder.withgoogle.com>. Simple story maps of various kinds can also

be created here:

<http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/storymap/>.

- Discuss the relationship between the physical environment and the state of the characters as the story unfolds (e.g., see page 160 as they near the end of their journey).

Sample reference to the Australian Curriculum: English:

Recognise and analyse the ways that characterisation, events and settings are combined in narratives, and discuss the purposes and appeal of different approaches

(ACELT1622)

9.5.2 Voice: Focalisation and Person

Two important decisions to be made when writing a story are:

- What person will the story be told in, i.e. first, second or third?
- Who (or what) will be the focaliser, i.e. the character (usually) that we follow around and through whose eyes we experience the story?

These relate in fairly complex ways, for example an author could choose a particular character as the focaliser, but then must decide if the story will be told in first or third person, i.e. as if the character is actually relating the story (first person) and the reader is right there in the middle of the action or as if the reader is observing events from the side (third person). For a fuller treatment of this issue, see for example <http://www2.anglistik.uni-freiburg.de/intranet/englishbasics/NarrativeSituation01.htm>.

For *Malini*, ask students to consider:

- What person is the story told in? What is the effect of this?
- Who is the main focalising character? (This would be an opportune moment to return to the visual analysis that students undertook of the cover as there is a clear link between Hillman's main choice of the focaliser and the designer's choices in creating the front cover.)
- Does the focalisation remain the same throughout the novel? If not, why? In particular, discuss the purpose and effect of the shifts that occur:
 - from Chapter 8 to 9
 - from Chapter 12 to 13
 - on pages 157 to 158.

Sample reference to the Australian Curriculum: English:

Interpret and analyse language choices, including sentence patterns, dialogue, imagery and other language features, in short stories, literary essays and plays (ACELT1767)

9.5.3 Characterisation

Student activities that explore characterization are embedded in the thematic activities above. See in particular:

[9.2.1](#)

[9.4.1](#)

[9.4.2](#)

[9.4.4](#)

9.5.4 Literary Style

9.5.4.1 Use of contrast

Contrast is a common literary device to create tension and interest in a story. (Although dealing specifically with contrast in persuasion, teachers might find this a useful article for reference:

<http://jackmalcolm.com/blog/2013/03/use-the-contrast-principle-for-more-persuasive-communications/>).

The table below will guide teachers and students in exploring and discussing two examples of Hillman’s use of contrast in *Malini*. This is not meant as a comprehensive list; students can be asked to locate further examples.

Contrast	Sample page references
Actions and behaviour of government and Tamil soldiers vs those of civilians	Soldiers: Chapters 1 and 2, page 131, page 175–176 Civilians: page 31–35 (the Sadhu), (page 126–127 (Randevee), page 147 (Adjuna) page 176 (Malini setting up school)
The beauty of the environment vs the ugliness of the civil war	Beauty of the environment: bottom of page 4 to page 5; bottom of page 29 to first half of page 30; page 98 (inside the cave); page 142; pages 153–154; page 160 Ugliness of the war: see above + top of page 38 <i>Note:</i> One of the things to look out for are the moments of beauty and happiness that break into times of tension, fear and ugliness, e.g., on page 67.

Students can:

- create dioramas based on the novel that highlight and draw attention to some of these contrasts. For more information, see:
 - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v= DJKyM3JIAI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJKyM3JIAI)
 - <http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Diorama>
- experiment with the use of contrast in writing their own narratives and expositions.

Sample reference to the Australian Curriculum: English:

Understand how authors often innovate on text structures and play with language features to achieve particular aesthetic, humorous and persuasive purposes and effects (ACELA1518)

9.5.4.2 Plot Development and Tension: Keeping the Readers Engaged

The over-arching complication for this story is the separation of Malini and Banni from their mother and father, and the need to reach their Appappa's home in central Sri Lanka. However, potentially this could be a boring story for the reader and difficult to stretch to the length of a novel without a series of minor problem-solution sequences along the way.

As a class, discuss how Hillman builds and maintains tension throughout the novel, e.g., through continually raising the stakes for characters. Here are some examples to get you started:

- page 5 (from 'That afternoon, Malini collected her sister...') to page 6 ('...anything of that sort to offer her.')
- page 112 to the top of page 113.
- Page 137 to 138
- Page 148–149 (the encounter with the Naga). This is a good extract to study in detail, paying attention to features such as: short clauses joined by commas and the conjunction *and*; cutting between actions and character reactions; the use of words with negative connotations to describe the snake.
- Page 153 when the children reach a low point.

Students can:

- experiment with some of these techniques in their own writing.
- imagine that the novel is to be made into a film and storyboard some key scenes, giving consideration to how visuals and editing could be used to re-create this tension in a different medium. The following would be useful for this process:

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LgDwNxGluCQ>
 - <http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/storyboarding-your-film.html>
 - <http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/pdfs/How-to-Create-Storyboard.pdf>
- use what they have learnt to create a book trailer aimed at persuading others to read the novel: see, for example, <http://www.insideadog.com.au/teachers/book-trailers>. The trailer should emphasise the tension in the *Malini*.

Sample reference to the Australian Curriculum: English:

Create literary texts that experiment with structures, ideas and stylistic features of selected authors (ACELT1798)

Understand the uses of commas to separate clauses (ACELA1521)

9.5.4.3 Use of Figurative Language: Simile, Metaphor and Personification

A valued feature of mature writing is the use of figurative language. *Malini* provides plenty of opportunities for both interpreting this type of language as well as exploring how it is created. As a starting point, see the following examples:

Simile

- page 17: ‘As Malini watched, sheets of paper spread over the sky, like an enormous flock of white birds descending as one to the earth below.’
- Page 41: ‘Relief flooded through Malini like warm honey.’
- Page 171: ‘A fever raged in Malini like a typhoon that roars in from the sea and turns the world upside down.’

Metaphor

- Page 173: ‘Time was a flock of white birds gliding across a sky of blue and red. Then it was a stream. She knelt and put her hand into the stream.’

Personification

- Page 30: ‘The stream was swift and clean. The water jumped over the rocks as if in delight at its freedom.’

Students can:

- try visualising these images (see the ‘[Sketch to stretch](#)’ activity in 9.2.1 of these notes).
- re-write the passages above removing the figurative language. Evaluate the original and new versions.
- experiment with writing their own examples of similes, metaphor and personification. The following sites might prove useful:
 - <http://yeahwrite.co/post/27210329386>

- <http://www.powerpoetry.org/actions/7-tips-creating-poignant-poetic-metaphors>
- <http://www.poetry4kids.com/blog/lessons/simile-and-metaphor-poetry-lesson/>
- <http://www.poetry4kids.com/blog/news/personification-poetry-lesson-plan/>

Sample reference to the Australian Curriculum: English:

*Understand, interpret and experiment with sound devices and imagery, including simile, metaphor and **personification**, in narratives, shape poetry, songs, anthems and odes (ACELT1611)*

*Experiment with **text** structures and **language features** and their effects in **creating** literary texts, for example, using imagery, **sentence** variation, metaphor and word choice (ACELT1800)*

10. Further Reading

Other Allen and Unwin books in the ‘Through My Eyes’ series include:

- *Shahana* by Rosanne Hawke
- *Amina* by J. L. Powers
- *Naveed* by John Heffernan
- *Emilio* by Sophie Masson
- *Zafir* by Prue Mason

See <http://www.throughmyeyesbooks.com.au> for further information.

In addition, students might like to read the following books that tackle topics and themes related to those in *Malini*.

Against the Odds by Marjolijn Hof (Allen and Unwin;

<http://www.allenandunwin.com/default.aspx?page=94&book=9781742375083>)

[The story of a young girl facing her fears and trying to cope after her father goes missing in a war zone.]

Alexander Altmann A10567 by Suzy Zail (Walker Books;

<http://www.walkerbooks.com.au/Books/Alexander-Altman-A10567-9781922179999>)

[A fourteen-year-old boy tries to survive Auschwitz – a story about hope, adversity and redemption.]

Jameela by Rukhsana Khan (Allen and Unwin;

<http://www.allenandunwin.com/default.aspx?page=94&book=9781742372594>)

[Inspired by a true story. A young Muslim girl tries to cope with life in post-Taliban Afghanistan.]

Lord of the Flies by William Golding (Faber and Faber;

<http://www.faber.co.uk/catalog/lord-of-the-flies/9780571056866>)

[This is the classic story by a Nobel Laureate of children surviving by themselves on an island after a plane crash. Recommended for more mature readers, the novel explores the darker side of human nature.]

Mirror by Jeannie Baker (Walker Books;

<http://www.jeanniebaker.com/mirror.htm>)

[An award-winning, wordless picture book that demonstrates our shared humanity through the comparison of a family living in Sydney and another in a village in Morocco.]

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes by Eleanor Coerr and Ronald Himler (Puffin; here's the link

to the ebook: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/sadako-thousand-paper-cranes/id357918068?mt=11>)

[Ten years after the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima, twelve-year-old Sadako is dying of leukaemia. Using a Japanese legend as her guide, she begins to fold 1000 paper cranes so that the gods will make her well. This is a story about facing adversity, hopefulness in the aftermath of war, and the power of friendship.]

The Book Thief by Markus Zusak (Random House;

<http://www.randomhouse.com/features/markuszusak/>)

[An award-winning novel about a young German girl Liesel trying to cope with separation from her family and helping a Jewish man survive the Nazi regime during World War 2.]

Tomorrow When the War Began by John Marsden (Pan MacMillan;

http://www.johnmarsden.com.au/books/tomorrow_when_the_war_began.html)

[This is the first book in Marsden's popular series set in an Australia that has been invaded by a foreign army. A group of teenagers must try to survive without their parents who have been captured and imprisoned.]

Woolvs in the Sitee by Margaret Wild and Anne Spudvilas (Viking;

<http://www.amazon.com/Woolvs-Sitee-Margaret-Wild/dp/1590785002>)

[Beset by the mysterious 'woolvs', a boy tries to survive by himself in a near-deserted city. This is an atmospheric picture book about resilience and over-coming fear.]

The civil war in Sri Lanka resulted in a large number of people seeking asylum in other countries, including Australia. For books on refugee and asylum seeker issues, see the following list compiled by the Refugee Council of Australia: http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/guide-bk.php#fict_child.

Finally, teachers and students may find the following article interesting: 'How children's war fiction has changed' (11 February 2011)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-12428759>.

11. About the Author of This Guide

Lindsay Williams has been teaching English for over thirty years and was a classroom teacher and Head of English in both state and private schools for many of those years. In that time, he was also extensively involved in syllabus development at a state and national level. Currently, he is undertaking his PhD through the University of New England, coordinates and teaches English curriculum to pre-service teachers at the University of Queensland, and runs his own consultancy providing professional development in literacy and English. In addition, he works freelance producing curriculum resource materials. For Allen and Unwin, he has produced numerous Teachers' Notes, including for novels such as *Jameela*, *Worldshaker* and *Liberator*, *Darius Bell and the Glitter Bees* and *Louis Beside Himself*. He can be followed on twitter: @Lindsayguru.

Appendix One: Studying the Cover of *Malini* by Robert Hill

Using the table below as a guide, study the front cover carefully and make notes on the visual elements that have gone into its design.

Elements of Image	Notes and Comments on What I Can See (Analysis)	
Composition How is the image organised?		
Shot Types Is this a close up, medium shot, long shot or very long shot?	Ideal: Top Half of Image	Real: Bottom Half of Image
Gaze Where are the people looking?		
Horizontal and Vertical Angle Is the viewer positioned to see the image from the side or from straight in front? Are we at eye level, looking from below or above?		
Depth of Field What is in and out of focus?		
Use of Colour What are the dominant colours?		
Words Are words used as a part of the image? If so, what and where are they?		

Appendix Two: Studying the Cover of *Malini* by Robert Hill

Possible answers that could be expected when students analyse the front cover of the novel.

Elements of Image	Notes and Comments on What I Can See (Analysis)	
Composition How is the image organised?	The cover is organised vertically into a top half (called the Ideal) and bottom half (called the Real). The Ideal half is where we place the things we are aiming for, our dreams, things/places etc we value. On this cover, the Ideal position is dominated by the face of a fairly young-looking girl wearing gold earrings. The Real is the nitty gritty, the detail, the grounded, the way things actually are. In this position on the cover is a fairly rag-tag group of people and vehicles on a dirt road in the (tropical?) country-side.	
	Ideal: Top Half of Image	Real: Bottom Half of Image
Shot Types Is this a close up, medium shot, long shot or very long shot?	The girl is shown in close-up and we only see her head. This brings the reader close to the girl.	The group of people and vehicles is shown as a very long shot. The viewer is positioned as being a quite a distance away, although close enough to make out some detail.
Gaze Where are the people looking?	The girl is staring straight out at the viewer in what is called a Demand, i.e. she demands our attention.	The human figures are not staring straight at the viewer; this is called an Offer, i.e. they are offered up for our observation.
Horizontal and Vertical Angle Is the viewer positioned to see the image from the side or from straight in front? Are we at eye level, looking from below or above?	Horizontal angle is front on which means we are invited to be a part of the girl's world. We are at eye level, i.e. equal to her.	We are positioned off to the side at an oblique angle; we are not directly a part of the lives of these people, we are observers.
Depth of Field What is in and out of focus?	The girl's head is in sharp focus but the background (green leaves of a forest?) is very fuzzy. So, our attention is focused on the girl.	The focus across the whole scene at the bottom is quite sharp; we are not invited to focus on one particular object or person.
Use of Colour What are the dominant colours?	The girl has a brown face, framed in black hair and she is wearing gold earrings. The background is a fairly rich green. However, this becomes more muted and washed out towards the centre.	The colours are predominantly blues and greens, but they are much more muted and washed out. Amongst the people and vehicles, there are some splashes of red and orange.
Words Are words used as a part of the image? If so, what and where are they?	'Through my eyes' (in BLOCK letters), 'Malini' and 'a novel' are printed in the centre of the cover. The word 'Malini' is much larger than the other words and is printed in a bright white. The words 'a novel' are much smaller and are printed at the top of the Real section.	At the bottom of the page in the Real section, the words 'Robert Hillman' (in BLOCK letters) and 'series editor Lyn White' are printed. The words 'Robert Hillman' are the second largest on the cover and are also printed in a bright white font, like 'Malini'.