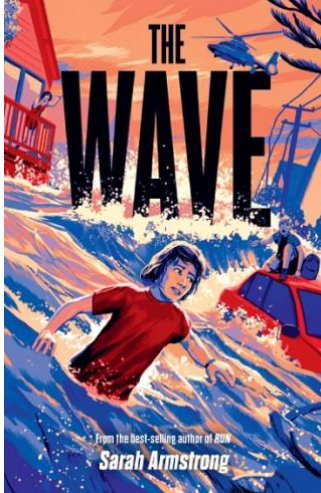


Teacher's Notes



The Wave

Written by Sarah Armstrong

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary-aged readers (ages 9-14, grades 5+)

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English (AC9E6LE05, AC9E6LY05, AC9E6LY06), HASS (AC9HS6S01, AC9HS6S02)
- General capabilities:
 - Personal & social capability – personal awareness
 - Personal & social capability – perseverance and adaptability
 - Personal & social capability – conflict resolution & leadership
 - Literacy - writing

THEMES

- Social justice
- Adventure
- Survival
- Family
- Community
- Bravery
- Wealth

SYNOPSIS

From the acclaimed author of *Run* comes this exhilarating survivalist novel about 13-year-old Max, who is home alone when a tsunami warning hits his coastal town.

Max loves surfing, the beach, and the chilled-out island he calls home – though he doesn't love all the tourists that swarm his peaceful beach town every summer. When a warning comes that an unexpected tsunami is just hours away, Max is home on his own and he can't find his beloved dog, Ralph.

With precious time ticking away and people speeding past him out of town, Max is running out of time to get to higher ground. Ultimately, he will have to choose between trying to survive a tsunami on his own, or banding together with whichever strangers are left behind, even if they're tourists. And he'd better hurry, because the tsunami is going to hit any moment ...

Perfect for fans of Tristan Bancks and Katherine Rundell, this gripping novel explores courage, misplaced loyalty and survival in the face of disaster.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

Sarah Armstrong is an award-winning journalist and the author of several acclaimed novels for children, including *Run* (CBCA Shortlisted Book of the Year for Younger Readers), *The Wave*, *Big Magic* (CBCA Notable Book of the Year for Younger Readers) and its sequel, *Magic Awry*. Her adult novel *Salt Rain* was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin. Sarah lives with her partner and daughter in the NSW town of Mullumbimby.

THEMES

Wealth

Wealth and ownership are significant themes in the book and lie at the heart of tensions on the island prior to the wave. Max and his mum are being forced to move out of their home so that Tig's uncle can build a tennis court for his holiday home. Max's best friend, Billy, had to leave the island when his family was kicked out of their home so it could be sold by the owner. Max is angry at the wealthy homeowners who buy multiple holiday properties only to leave them vacant for most of the year while families who have lived for years on the island are being forced to relocate. But Tig and Clem challenge his perceptions about rich and poor people, and the wave shows everyone how precarious the security of wealth can be.

- BIRIN ISLAND NEEDS HOMES NOT HOLIDAY HOUSES FOR RICH PEOPLE. (p5)
- 'When I was a kid, there was a big old house here. Mum said it used to be a hospital, then it was split into a few apartments until someone knocked it down and built this place. So I guess it's owned by people who can afford to have a huge house they stay in for only a couple of months a year. Rich people. Like you.' It comes out sounding even more bitter than I feel. Which is pretty bitter.
Clem widens her eyes at me. 'I'm not going to apologise for the fact that my mum and dad earn good money. It's not like we're doing anything wrong.' (p115-116)
- 'We don't have much money, but there's nothing pathetic about that! When people are poor, it's just bad luck or not being paid enough. And it's pretty obvious "rich people" own this place.' I imitate her air quotes from earlier. *Rich and ignorant*, I think. *Like you*. She glares back at me. 'I *never* said being poor was pathetic. But you talk as if being poor makes someone a good person and being rich makes them bad.'
'I do not.' But – if I'm honest – I do kind of think that. (p132-133)
- 'You think you own this island, Max. But it was just luck of the draw that you were born here.' She points at Clem. 'And luck of the draw that you were born rich. Life is a lottery.' (p142-143)
- 'You know, it's great Gladys is letting us all live here now,' she says, 'but why didn't she ever offer to share her land before? She knew people were leaving the island or living in garages. She had plenty of room. I mean, she's rich. Rich in land.'



Discussion questions:

- What are some of the differences between the rich and the poor on the island?
- How does the wave reshape these differences?
- What qualities does Max attribute to 'rich people' and 'poor people' at the start of the book? How do his perceptions change after he meets Tig and Clem?
- Consider the final chapter – whose attitudes have changed? Whose have stayed the same? Why do you think this is?
- What do you think the author wants readers to understand or consider about wealth and ownership?

Survival

I'm used to being held under by the weight of a wave in the ocean, but this is different. This water churns like the ocean never does and there are strange muffled sounds all around me. My shoes are full of water and keep pulling me down. I try to undo the laces but things keep smashing into me. I'm running out of air. *I need air.* My lungs are tighter and tighter, burning as I claw at the water. *Where's the surface?* (p67)

The Wave explores the theme of survival in a number of different ways – there's the immediate physical survival of the wave itself, but also long-term survival concerns (finding water, shelter, communicating with the mainland). Max also survives in other ways – he is surviving the trauma of losing his dad, and of the ongoing unrest and changes to his life. Readers are also invited to consider the role we play in each other's survival, and the responsibility we have to help those around us (Dougal, Tig, Clem, Archie, Ralph) survive.

Discuss:

- The differences between individual and collective survival
- Threats to survival
- What we need to survive (in the short term and the long-term)
- Our responsibilities to others
- What we can do to prepare for threats such as tsunamis – what would you want to know if you found yourself in this situation?

WRITING STYLE

Conflict and resolution – writers use conflict to build tension in stories and to keep readers interested. The main conflict in *The Wave* is the wave itself, however there are a number of other underlying conflicts that help to move the story along. Consider the following examples of conflict in the story.

Discuss how and when the author resolves each one. How does each conflict change the direction of the story (think about what the characters were doing before the conflict, and how this changed as a result of



it). Categorise each example as minor (resolved within a few pages) or major (resolved across the whole novel)

- Wealthy investors buying property on the island
- The cops questioning Max about the graffiti
- When Max realises that it's too late to leave the island
- Max believing that Tig is rich
- Ralph going missing
- The second wave
- Max fear of the ocean
- Clem's cut getting infected
- Running out of water
- The bridge collapsing

COMPREHENSION

- What causes the wave?
- Max runs out of time to leave the island because he's looking for Ralph. Why is Ralph so important to Max? What does he represent?
- When Max first meets Tig, he writes her off as a spoilt rich girl. What does he learn about her that changes his mind? Why is Tig so angry?
- What happens to make Max fear the ocean?
- At first, Clem believes that her father will come looking for them, but when a helicopter does arrive, it doesn't stop. Why not? What do the kids do to try and attract its attention?
- Why isn't the tsunami water safe to drink? Where does Max look for (and eventually find) safe drinking water? Where else would you look?
- What skills do Max and Tig have that help them to survive the wave and its aftermath?
- How does Clem's dad help Max and his mother after the wave?
- How does the wave change Max's relationship with his uncle?

WRITING EXERCISE

Choose one of the conflict points listed above. Who is the main character involved in the action? Imagine they make a different decision and write an alternative scene from their perspective.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES



- Research tsunamis and create a poster to help raise awareness. You might choose to focus on the causes of tsunamis, or information on what to do if one hits. Where are tsunamis most likely to occur?
 - What natural disasters are most likely to occur in your area? How does your community prepare for them?
- Rewrite a chapter of the book from the point of view of one of the other characters.
- Put together a tsunami survival kit – think about what the characters in the book would have found useful, but also what they could carry.
- Using descriptions from the book, draw a map of the island before and after the wave. Make a note describing the action that takes place at any of the key locations.

RELATED READING

We Run Tomorrow

By Nat Amore

Cop and Robber

By Tristan Bancks

The Explorer

Katherine Rundell

Hatchet

By Gary Paulsen

Run

Sarah Armstrong

The Dog Runner

Bren MacDibble

