



# TEACHERS' NOTES

Compiled by Cate Whittle

This teacher resource is  
suitable for years 5 - 8

## STARBERRIES AND KEE

**Written by Cate Whittle**

Middle Grade Fiction

**Storytorch Press**

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## About Starberries and Kee

*“The stars linked them through space – and even through time. Those same stars had looked down on all the people that had come before her and would still twinkle when she was as old as Libby and maybe even if she had great-grandchildren of her own.”*

Wren is a Wild Child who has been brought up on the mountain by Old Man, learning everything he knows from nature, while Hannah has always lived in the city. When their paths collide, a secret friendship brings a family full circle, linking the past to the present and the old with the new.

**Starberries and Kee** is solar punk climate-fiction told with positivity and hope. It confirms that in the face of crisis, it is community and compassion that defines us, connecting us to the future we choose to create.

It is an excellent read aloud for the classroom – a positive story about the world young people will create in response to preventing the worst of climate change with cliffhanger tension as the story comes to a climax.

## About the Author: Cate Whittle

Cate writes fantasy and adventure fiction for children and young adults. She writes about relationships and rediscovery (and dragons and magical worlds), encouraging her readers to become problem-solvers and to see their world in a positive light.

Fascinated by the natural world, Cate is fortunate to live on a bush block in a beautiful rural valley near the nation’s capital.

Cate is the author of the **Trouble** junior fiction series published by Omnibus Scholastic, including **Trouble and the New Kid** (2017), which was shortlisted in the CBCA Book of the Year Awards. Other books include **Wyrd**, and **Emergency Rescue Angel**, also with Omnibus Scholastic, and Cate also has two further junior fiction books coming out with them soon, **Millie, The Littlest Puppy**, and **Millie and Miss Sparrow’s School of Dance**.

## Themes

- Climate Change
- Sustainable Living
- Alternative Energy
- Community
- Family
- Friendship
- Resilience
- Courage
- Adventure



# Links to the Australian Curriculum

## Key Curriculum Areas

### **English**

#### *Language*

- Language for interaction
- Text structure and organisation
- Expressing and organising ideas

#### *Literature*

- Literature and Context
- Responding to Literature
- Examining literature
- Creating literature

#### *Literacy*

- Texts in context
- Interacting with others
- Interpreting, analysing, evaluating
- Creating texts

### **Science**

#### *Science as a Human Endeavour*

### **Technologies**

### **Humanities and Social Sciences**

#### *Researching*

#### *Analysing*

#### *Evaluating and Reflecting*

### **The Arts**

#### *Drama*

#### *Visual Arts*

### **General Capabilities**

#### *Literacy*

#### *Critical and Creative Thinking*

#### *Personal and Social Capability*

### **Cross Curriculum Priorities**

#### *Sustainability*

- Systems

- World Views

## Learning Activities

### Before Reading

Some suggested questions for discussion (whole class or group).

- Look at the front cover of the novel.
  - Does the title give any clue about the story? What could it be about?
  - What about the cover illustration – does that give any clues? What can you see? What do you think is happening?
- Read the blurb on the back cover.
  - Does this change your first impressions? In what way?
  - What do you think is meant by the term *solar punk*?
  - What do you think our future world will be like?
- Read the opening paragraph.
  - What does this tell you about what might happen in the story?
  - What does it tell you about this character?
  - What image do you have of the setting?

Following the discussion students could make a note of their first impressions to compare with their understanding of the novel once they have finished reading or listening to it.

## English

### Narrative

- **Starberries and Kee** is written in third person narrative, using the past tense, even though the story is set in the future, and the point of view swaps between the two main characters.
  - How do you think this helps the story?
  - What would happen if we only saw the events through the eyes of only one of the characters?
  - Could the story be told in first person?
- Rewrite one of the scenes as either Wren or Hannah. Remember that you will not know what the other person is thinking, OR
- Write a scene telling Melanie's story and how she feels about Hannah coming to live with her family.
- How might this change the story?



## *Characters*

Wren and Hannah are the two main characters and much of the story is based around the relationship they form although they each have their own story arc.

- Describe the two main characters.
  - Think of their personalities rather than just their appearance
  - How are they different? In what ways are they similar?
  - Why do you think they become friends?
  - Do they change over the course of the story? How?
- Make a list of major secondary characters
  - Why are they important to the story?
  - Is there an antagonist or a 'villain'? What makes them so? Do they change?
  - Do you see Kee as a character in the story? Why or why not? Is she important to the story? Why (or why not)?
  - Is Old Man really there? How is he important to the story?

## *Story Arc*

Whenever an author writes a story, the characters have a problem (or two or three) to solve.

- What problem is Wren facing as the story opens? How has he arrived in this position? Is it the main problem that he needs to solve? What is it that he longs for the most?
- What is the problem that Hannah is faced with at the beginning of the story/ what is it that she wants? Why can't she have what she wants?
- As the story unfolds both Wren and Hannah find new problems arising:
  - make a note whenever you notice one, and whether it is resolved or not.
  - decide which ones are major plot points in the story and mark them on a story mountain or a storyboard.
  - highlight the points where Wren's story and Hannah's story intersect.
- As the story develops tensions rise:
  - what is the climax of the story? How could you tell?
  - How is the climax resolved? What happens?
  - Do Wren and Hannah get what they wanted in the end? Is it a 'happy ever after' ending?

## *Setting*

In any story the setting is important because the action of the story is related to where it happens. In ***Starberries and Kee***, the story is set in a future world where climate change has created challenges to the way people live.

- How is Hannah's city different to the city from the past?
  - make a list or describe what the Street looks like and how people live there. Think about her home, transport, school, energy, food, technology.
  - what do we know about the climate from how the people live?

- What are some things that we are told in the story that help us picture how things have changed?
- Describe the place that Wren comes from?
  - Why do you think people went there? How did they live?
- Both Hannah and Wren feel like 'fish out of water' at the Pod:
  - Why? How is it different to what they are used to?
  - describe South Hills Pod and the Valley.
  - list similarities and differences for Hannah and Wren.

In this future, *solarpunk* world, people still have access to technology but have learned to live more sustainably.

- Is this world plausible? What makes you think so (or not)?
- How is technology used?
- How important is community to the success of the world?
- Would you like to live in this world?
  - If so, where would you prefer to live – the city, the mountain, or the pod?
  - What is it that you like about it?
  - If not, describe the future world of your dreams.

### *Genre*

*Solarpunk* is a type of speculative fiction and is based around a future world where technology and sustainable living have created an environment where communities and individuals work together for common good. In some *solarpunk*, anarchy has taken over and there is no longer a central government, but in ***Starberries and Kee*** there is still a government, but smaller communities have become more important in caring for one another.

- How has the setting of the story contributed to the genre?
- Why do you think the story has been set in the future?
- What else could the future look like?
- Why do you think the author chose to use *solar punk* to tell the story?
- Can you think of any other stories set in the future?
- In what way are they the same? Or different?

### *Creative Writing*

Write a narrative about living in this or a similar *solarpunk* future world. Think about what you will include in your story

- Who are your main characters and what will they do?
- What is their environment like and how do they interact with it?
- Decide whether you will be writing in first or third person (second can be a bit tricky but it is not impossible) and whether you will write in present or past tense.

## Science

Scientists have been predicting climate change for a long time now and have come up with several different scenarios for the future based on human behaviour and whether we continue on the same trajectory of consumption and use of fossil fuels for energy, or different changes that we could make.

Research and list some evidence-based indications that support the scientists' predictions (eg. weather patterns, polar ice, sea levels, natural disasters).

- How are these depicted in *Starberries and Kee*?

Discover ways that people are working together (governments, communities) to limit or slow down change.

- How is science and technology changing?
- What can individuals like you and me do to help?
- List some things that you could do today and compare them to the things that the characters in story are doing.

One thing that lots of people have started to do is to grow some of their own food. This helps reduce 'food miles' and improves local biodiversity (as opposed to the agricultural monocultures in intensive farming systems).

- Try growing a food plant for you and your family to enjoy.
  - Peas are easy to start with if you have a little bit of ground, or you can grow a tomato or some herbs in a pot on your windowsill.
  - See what happens if you grow plants under different conditions.
  - Using the same kind of plant try growing one in a small plant pot and one in a larger one or put one plant pot in a sunny spot and the other in shade or vary the amounts of water you give two plants in the same location – YOU decide what your experiment will show you.
  - Don't forget to observe your plants and keep records of how they are doing.
- Design your own veggie patch.
  - Draw a plan of your dream veggie patch and label all the different vegetables. Include information such as which way is north, which areas will get the most sun, whether or not the land is sloping, and where your water will come from.

## Technologies

In *Starberries and Kee* communities rely on technology based on a sustainable, *solarpunk* future.

- Make a list of the technologies that they are using and note how they are used.
- Find out how these technologies (today) are designed to address different considerations such as sustainability, access to resources, current and future use.
- What sort of technology do you think is important for our future? Why?

## Humanities and Social Sciences

Use research skills to find out about the importance of environments, including climate and natural vegetation, to animals and people.

Collect information from different sources and compare and contrast the data.

- Write a paragraph outlining your conclusion based on your analysis.
- Reflect on your conclusion to propose actions.

Find out about the use and management of natural resources and different ways this can be done sustainably.

- Identify what is meant by natural resources and where they come from
- How are these used?
- What are some sustainable practices or strategies that can help us manage our need for these resources for the future?
- Find out about organisations or community groups that manage resources

Find out about the role of government and the decisions it makes on behalf of communities.

- What are some government responsibilities linked to managing natural resources?
- How can members of the community have input to or influence government decision making?
- What are some things that you would like the government to do about making sure our future is safe and our natural resources are properly managed?

## The Arts

### *Drama*

Thinking about the characters in ***Starberries and Kee***, use your understanding of the story to act out a chosen scene (eg. when Hannah says goodbye to her friends, or the first time she meets her new family, or when Wren finds her)

- How would the characters speak?
- Add dialogue to develop what is happening in the scene.
- How would the characters move or interact with each other and their environment?
- Include any tension and make sure their focus is clear in your playbuilding.

### *Visual Arts*

Choosing your favourite technique or medium (drawing, painting, collage) – or trying something completely new and different –

Create an artwork (or two) that reflects your understanding of the story or the characters from ***Starberries and Kee***, for example:

- A book cover
- A poster advertising the book
- A poster about sustainable practices that everyone can do
- A scene from the story
- a depiction of one of the settings
- an illustration of an event
- A storyboard or a sequence of three (or more) pictures that tells part of the story
- Some character sketches
- A map of South Hills Pod or the Street or Valley
- An illustrated design for a vegetable patch

