



Rainfish

ANDREW PATERSON

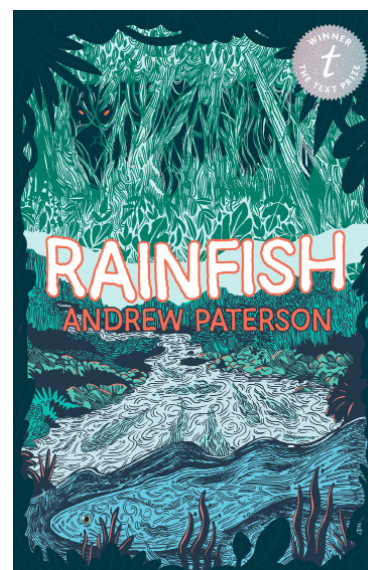
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Fiction

RECOMMENDED READING AGE: 11+

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CURRICULUM GUIDE

The following teaching guide has been designed to embrace shared curriculum values. Students are encouraged to communicate their understanding of a text through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing.

The learning activities aim to encourage students to think critically, creatively and independently, to reflect on their learning and connect it to an audience, purpose and context. They encompass a range of forms with a focus on language, literature and literacy. Where appropriate, they promote the integration of ICT and life skills.

SYNOPSIS

Aaron lives with his mum and older brother in a small town on the edge of a rainforest in tropical Far North Queensland. He's sick of being the little brother, left out of all the interesting stuff the older kids get up to.

So when he meets Damon he's keen to impress him. It's all going well, until Damon suggests they break into the church. Aaron's nervous and uncomfortable. But he can't back out now—he's only just beginning to be accepted.

When the theft is reported in the local newspaper and the police knock on the door, Aaron finds himself hiding the truth in a tangle of lies. And before long his deep sense of guilt and fear of being found out overwhelm him.

And then, when he discovers that the mudcod in the old bath in the backyard—the fish he'd caught in the river in the rainforest—are the rainfish of local legend, he becomes convinced that he is responsible for the terrible rainstorms and floods that devastate the town.

Rainfish is a delightful middle-grade novel exploring childhood innocence—a warm and humorous portrayal of a young boy trying to undo an impulsive mistake.

PRAISE FOR RAINFISH

'I was swept away by this stunning, swampy tale of the loneliness that comes with a guilty conscience. An absolutely unforgettable book.'

Carly Nugent, author of *The Peacock Detectives*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew Paterson is a medical doctor. He was brought up and currently lives and works in Far North Queensland, where *Rainfish* is set. He has a graduate diploma in Creative Writing from the University of Melbourne.

BEFORE READING

1. *Rainfish* is set in a small town in Far North Queensland. Search some images of the landscape. Make a list of adjectives that describe this part of Australia. What are some of the things that make Far North Queensland different from where you live? What do you think it would be like to live in Far North Queensland?
2. Have you ever done something you knew was wrong? Why did you do it? How did you feel afterwards? How do we know what is right and wrong?
3. *Rainfish* is set a few years ago before many people had mobile phones or the internet. What do you think it would be like not to have those things?
4. Have you ever been fishing? Describe the steps. What did you use for bait? Did you catch any fish?

WHILE READING

1. Chapter 1 of *Rainfish* begins with Aaron imagining himself rescuing a baby and being a hero. Imagine a situation where you might be a hero. What did you do? How did you feel?



- Aaron meets Damon in chapter 1. Do you think Damon would be a good friend for Aaron? Why/why not? Do you think everything Damon says is truthful? Why does Aaron want to hang out with Damon?
- Connor tells Aaron that he intends to go 'sleuthing' to uncover the person responsible for stealing the rosary beads. (p. 57) What does 'sleuthing' mean? Do you think Connor will discover the culprit?
- Mum introduces Aaron and Connor to her new boyfriend, Peter. (p. 48) What do you think of Peter?
- Peter takes Aaron and Connor fishing at a hidden spot in the rainforest. Make a list of the adjectives used to describe the rainforest and the creek. (pp. 130–31)
- On page 160, Aaron reflects on the memories he has of his dad. What can Aaron remember about his dad? What kind of man do you think his dad was?
- 'Fingleton is known for its high rainfall, but few have seen anything like the current flood.' (p. 201) Do you believe the story from the old book about the rainfish? Is Fingleton flooding because Aaron, Connor and Peter caught the rainfish?

AFTER READING

CHARACTERS

- In Aaron's eyes, Damon is pretty tough and cool. Is Damon as tough and as reckless as he makes himself out to be?
- 'Connor was a lunch-time library kid.' (p. 44) Does Connor act like his true self around Damon?
- 'For brothers we really didn't have much in common.' (p. 45) How is Aaron different from his brother Connor? Should being different prevent people from getting along?

THEMES

Guilt

- 'I was the kind of kid who felt guilty a lot.' (p. 27) How does guilt feel? How does it feel for Aaron? Have you ever felt guilty about something?
- Aaron knows it is wrong to break into the church. (chapter 2) What does he do and say that tell us he thinks it's a bad idea? Why does he do it? How does Aaron feel afterwards? Why do you think doesn't he tell anyone what he has done?
- After Aaron and Damon break into the church Aaron is visited by a black panther that he calls his conscience-panther? How does the panther make Aaron feel? What do you think the panther represents? At the end of the story Aaron tells us that the panther stayed away from him. Why do you think he didn't see the panther again?
- 'Anyway, you're not even guilty, are ya. You're just afraid of getting caught, that's all.' (p. 167) Is there a difference between feeling guilty and being afraid of being caught? Is it important to feel remorse? Why?

- On page 220 Aaron wonders whether his actions in stealing the rosary beads and catching the rainfish are responsible for the catastrophe. Why does he think this? Do you think he's right?

Recklessness and danger

- The flood is exciting in some ways but also dangerous. Make a list of all the dangers and all the fun things. Are there things that are both fun and dangerous?
- Is there a difference between being brave and being reckless. Find some examples of recklessness in the story. Are there any times when Aaron is brave?

Family

- Aaron is angry with his older brother for not including him. He wants Connor to 'pay' for his actions. But when Connor is treated badly by the other boys and when he is struggling in the floodwater, Aaron wants to protect him. What makes him change his feelings towards his brother? Can you be angry with someone and love them at the same time?
- Pete takes Aaron and Connor fishing and helps to look after them. Is he a good father figure? Make a list of his good points and one of his bad points.
- Gran keeps Aaron's secret. Why doesn't she punish Aaron? Do you think she did the right thing?

Stories and legends

- Aaron is surprised to learn that the mudcod he and Pete and Connor caught in the rainforest are also known as rainfish. There are two stories about the rainfish told in this book. What is the message in Gran's rainfish story (p. 37)? Does Aaron believe that this is a Dreamtime story? Why/why not? What do you think?
- Aaron reads a different rainfish story in the book written by an old explorer (pp. 72–75). Is it a real Aboriginal story? What are some of the clues that tell you it isn't? What is the message of this story?

RESPONDING

- Aaron reads about the investigation of the stolen rosary beads in the *Fingleton Gazette*. Write your own article for your local newspaper reporting on a community news story.
- 'What do you think I should do? Could you please give me advice?' (p. 162) Pretend that Aaron's dad was to write back to his confession letter. What would he say?
- What do you think happened to Coldy in the floods? Write a story explaining what happened on the night he disappeared.
- What advice would you give to a friend in a similar situation to Aaron?