An aerial photograph of a city, likely Hiroshima, with a large nuclear mushroom cloud rising in the background. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark red rectangle on the right side, which contains the text.

# Exploring Ethical Issues in John Marsden's *Tomorrow When the War Began* Unit of Work

(NSW English Stage 4 Syllabus  
for the Australian curriculum)

Unit overview and lessons  
based on exploring ethical  
issues in *Tomorrow When  
the War Began* by John  
Marsden and other war texts

SHELLEY MCNAMARA

*Quiller*

Exploring Ethical Issues in John  
Marsden's *Tomorrow When the War  
Began*: Unit of Work

Shelley McNamara

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<b>Unit of work:</b> Exploring Ethical Issues in John Marsden's <i>Tomorrow When the War Began</i>	<b>Year:</b> 8 <b>Stage:</b> 4
<b>Duration:</b> 8 weeks	<b>Assessment:</b> Poetry analysis, postmodern creative piece of writing, presentation
<b>Text types:</b> Novel, poetry, speeches, short story	<b>Concepts:</b> Ethics and interpretation
<p><b>Learning experiences:</b> reading, writing, viewing, listening, creating</p> <p><b>Links to other learning areas:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History</li> </ul> <p><b>General capabilities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literacy</li> <li>• Critical and creative thinking</li> <li>• Ethical understanding</li> <li>• Personal and social capability</li> </ul> <p><b>Other learning across the curriculum areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difference and diversity</li> <li>• Civics and citizenship</li> </ul>	

<b>Essential Learning Goal</b>	<b>Key Learning Ideas</b>	<b>Overarching Questions</b>
For students to assess the ethical implications of ideas explored in texts about war.	<p>To compare and contrast war texts.</p> <p>To identify and explore ethical issues in war texts.</p> <p>To reflect on own process of writing postmodern creative texts.</p> <p>To personally reflect on texts about war.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the ethical implications of ideas explored in texts?</li> <li>2. How do personal ethics compare and contrast with ethical ideas explored in war texts?</li> <li>3. What are the similarities and differences in meaning between various war texts?</li> </ol>

**Exploring Ethical Issues in John Marsden's Tomorrow When the War Began Unit of Work  
Links to NSW English Syllabus K-10 for the Australian Curriculum: Stage 4**

**Objective A: Outcome 1**

**A student:** responds to and composes texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure EN4-1A

<b>Sub-strands</b>	<b>Content descriptions</b>
Engage personally with texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider and analyse the ways their own experience affects their responses to texts</li> </ul>
Develop and apply contextual knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>interpret the stated and implied meanings in spoken texts, and use evidence to support or challenge different perspectives (ACELY1730)</li> </ul>
Understand and apply knowledge of language forms and features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify and evaluate devices that create tone, for example humour, wordplay, innuendo and parody in poetry, humorous prose, drama or visual texts (ACELT1630)</li> </ul>
Respond to and compose texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>respond to and compose imaginative, informative and persuasive texts for different audiences, purposes and contexts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure</li> <li>identify and discuss main ideas, concepts and points of view in spoken texts to evaluate qualities, for example the strength of an argument or the lyrical power of a poetic rendition (ACELY1719)</li> </ul>

**Objective B: Outcome 3**

**A student:** uses and describes language forms, features and structures of texts appropriate to a range of purposes, audiences and contexts EN4-3B

Engage personally with texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>engage with the language and structures of texts in meaningful, contextualised and authentic ways</li> <li>identify, discuss and reflect on the ideas and information in a range of texts</li> </ul>
Develop and apply contextual knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recognise and use appropriate metalanguage in discussing a range of language forms, features and structures</li> </ul>
Understand and apply knowledge of language forms and features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>interpret and analyse language choices, including sentence patterns, dialogue, imagery and other language features, in short stories, literary essays and plays (ACELT1767)</li> </ul>

**Objective C: Outcome 6**

**A student:** identifies and explains connections between and among texts EN4-6C

<b>Sub-strands</b>	<b>Content descriptions</b>
Develop and apply contextual knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explain the similarities and differences in meaning and language between texts created for different purposes or audiences</li> </ul>
Understand and apply knowledge of language forms and features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>categorise texts by content, composer and genre considering language forms, features and structures of texts</li> <li>understand and explain the ways in which use of detail, perspective and choice of vocabulary connect texts</li> </ul>

<b>Respond to and compose texts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify and explain the links between the ideas, information, perspectives and points of view presented in a range of different texts</li> <li>• identify, compare and describe the connection between texts with similar subject matter, such as a book and its film adaptation</li> </ul>
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**Objective D: Outcome 7**  
**A student:** demonstrates understanding of how texts can express aspects of their broadening world and their relationships within it EN4-7D


<b>Sub-strands</b>	<b>Content descriptions</b>
<b>Engage personally with texts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explore and analyse the ways in which personal experiences and perspectives shape their responses to texts</li> <li>• draw on experience to consider the ways the 'real world' is represented in the imaginary worlds of texts, including imaginative literature, film, media and multimedia texts</li> </ul>
<b>Develop and apply contextual knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• compare and contrast texts that present alternative views of their own world</li> </ul>
<b>Respond to and compose texts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• respond to and compose sustained texts in an increasingly wide range of forms that reflect their broadening world and their relationships within it</li> </ul>

**Objective E: Outcome 9**  
**A student:** uses, reflects on and assesses their individual and collaborative skills for learning EN4-9E

<b>Engage personally with texts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• articulate and reflect on the pleasures and difficulties, successes and challenges experienced in their individual and collaborative learning</li> </ul>
<b>Understand and apply knowledge of language forms and features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop and use vocabulary for describing, analysing and reflecting on their learning experiences</li> </ul>
<b>Respond to and compose texts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discuss and explain the processes of responding and composing, identifying the personal pleasures and difficulties experienced</li> </ul>

NSW Board of Studies, *NSW Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum: English K-10 Syllabus*, 2012, pp 116-133



Content descriptions	Lesson Outline	Suitable for homework	Resources
<p><b>Outcome 1</b> consider and analyse the ways their own experience affects their responses to texts</p> <p>identify and evaluate devices that create tone, for example humour, wordplay, innuendo and parody in poetry, humorous prose, drama or visual texts (ACELT1630)</p> <p><b>Outcome 7</b> explore and analyse the ways in which personal experiences and perspectives shape their responses to texts</p>	<p><b>Narrative voice and tone in the novel</b></p> <p><b>Guidance</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain, discuss or read notes from the worksheet about narrative voice and tone in the novel.</li> <li>2. Ask students to complete the exercise below:</li> </ol> <p><b>Exercise</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Who is narrating or telling the story?</li> <li>2. What type of language does the narrator use to tell the story? What does this tell you about the character?</li> <li>3. What tone of voice of voice does the narrator use? What does this say about the narrator’s approach to the situation she is in?</li> </ol> <p><b>Diversity of Learners</b> To differentiate the curriculum, implement the alternative approaches and/or discuss and ask students to complete the exercises below:</p> <p><b>Extension</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write a personal reflection on the first chapter of <i>Tomorrow When the War Began</i>. Write about 200 words. Write about your own ideas, feelings and opinions in response to the opening chapter. You may, for instance, want to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interpret narrative elements such as plot, characters and setting</li> <li>• pose questions and make predictions about upcoming events in the novel</li> <li>• make connections with your own experiences and people and places you know</li> <li>• comment on language features, for example, how the narrator hooks you in</li> <li>• any other aspects of the chapter that interested you.</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p><b>Special educational needs</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write dot points in response.</li> </ol>		<p>Narrative voice and tone in the novel worksheet</p> <p><i>Tomorrow When the War Began</i></p>