



TEACHERS' NOTES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary and lower secondary
(ages 10 to 14; years 6 to 9)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English, Legal Studies
- **General capabilities:** Critical and Creative Thinking; Literacy; Personal and Social Capability; Ethical Understanding

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Award-winning author Tristan Bancks brings readers another story with challenging moral and ethical dilemmas to explore.
- A fast-paced and action-packed story with broad appeal for young readers.
- Find out more from Tristan Bancks about the creative writing process and strategies and tips you can use to improve your own writing.

THEMES

- Ethical dilemmas
- Relationships and conflict
- Forgiveness
- Resilience
- The law
- Honesty, trust and faith
- Family
- Running and motivation

PREPARED BY

Tristan Bancks and Penguin Random House Australia

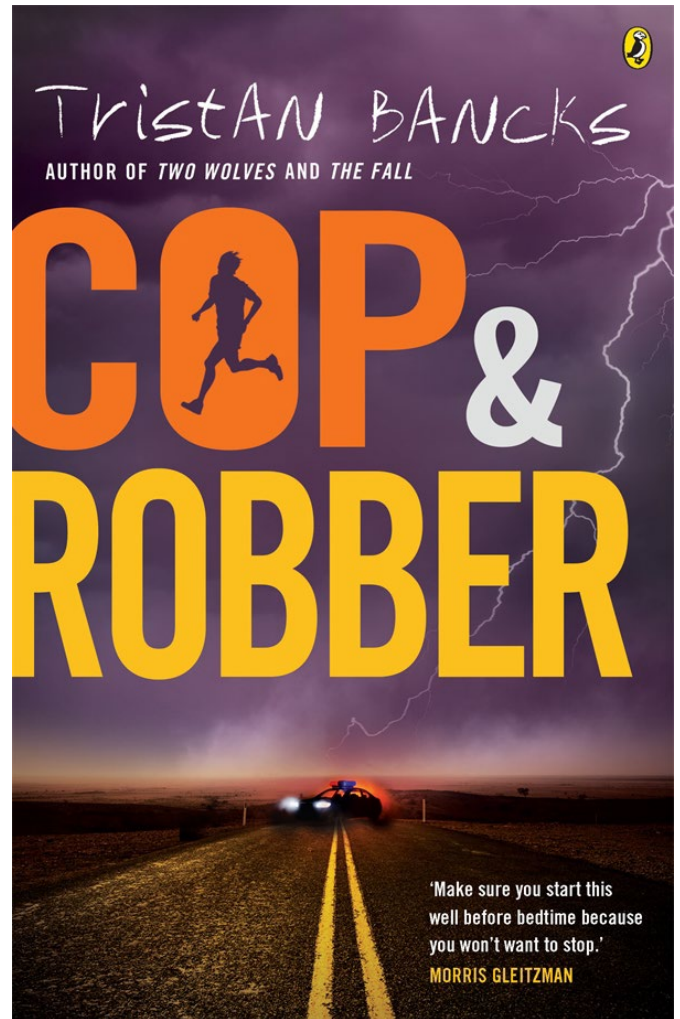
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Cop and Robber Tristan Bancks

PLOT SUMMARY

From the bestselling author of *Two Wolves*, *The Fall* and *Detention*.

If your mum was a cop and your dad was a crim who needed your help to commit a crime, would you do it to save him? At what cost?

Nash Hall's dad is a criminal who just can't seem to go straight. He wants Nash to help him commit a robbery. A big one. The trouble is, Nash's mum is a cop. And the robbery is at Nash's school. But Dad owes a lot of money to some very dangerous people and if Nash doesn't help him do the job, it could cost both their lives.

'Make sure you start this well before bedtime because you won't want to stop.'

– MORRIS GLEITZMAN

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Tristan Bancks tells stories for the page and screen. His books for kids and teens include *Two Wolves*, *The Fall*, *Detention*, the Tom Weekly series, *Nit Boy* and *Ginger Meggs*, a 100th anniversary book of short stories based on characters created by his great-great uncle, Jimmy Bancks, in 1921. Tristan's books have won and been shortlisted for many awards, including a Children's Book Council of Australia Honour Book, the Prime Minister's Literary Awards, ABIA, YABBA, KOALA, NSW Premier's Literary Awards and Queensland Literary Awards. His latest book is *Cop & Robber*, a tense, fast-paced crime novel with lots of laughs for age 10+.

Tristan is a writer-ambassador for literacy non-profit Room to Read. He is currently working with producers to develop a number of his books for the screen. He's excited by the future of storytelling and inspiring others to create.

Find out more about Tristan's books, play games, watch videos, join his Young Writer's StorySchool and help him try to change the world at tristanbancks.com. Check out Tristan's extra *Cop & Robber* resources and videos at: tristanbancks.com/copandrobber.

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Where did the story come from?

I was driving to visit a school in Queensland one day and I had a voice in my head about a kid whose dad was always robbing service stations and the dad

thought he was really good at it, but he wasn't. He was hopeless.

At my school visit we were talking about crime writing. I read a group of year 8s what I'd written and they responded well and it started a discussion. One of the kids' parents was a cop and so I wondered ... what if my character's other parent was a police officer and they actually lived in the police station?

In my town, the police station was also a house. And I wondered what it might be like if you lived in the police station and you heard your parent arresting people through your bedroom wall. What would it be like to be the kid of a police officer? Would it be exciting and fun and would you get to see things that other kids don't get to see? Or would it be scary sometimes, worrying that something might happen to your parent?

Would other kids think you were cool because of your mum being a police officer? What about in high school? Would that change at all?

So, Nash became the son of a cop and a robber. And he was stuck in the middle. This situation seemed unlikely if the parents were still together. But what if they had broken up, they were divorced and he spent half the week at each of their houses?

Now I felt as though I had a story that I wanted to explore. I thought it could be quite exciting and funny at the same time.

How did Nash become a runner?

When I start writing a story, the characters are wafer-thin. I'm not sure who they are yet. They are, usually, some version of me when I was a kid. But, as I place them in difficult and life-threatening situations, they start to split off from me and become themselves. They make certain choices and their voices come through and that's what happened with Nash.

I always wonder, 'What kind of person are you?' At first I thought Nash might be a school captain contender and maybe that's what he was vying for in the story, but then I thought that running might be a powerful action for Nash. He's running from the law, running from his parents, running from himself.

Where is the story set, and why?

Cop & Robber was initially set in the California desert, in a place called Lone Pine. I was living in Los Angeles for a few months at the end of 2019 and beginning of 2020, and a couple of weeks before coronavirus really hit, my son and I took a drive out to Lone Pine. We drove around the locations and took photos and I knew that this was the setting for my story.

When we returned to Australia I reset the story in NSW. I did a similar thing to this with my book *The Fall*.



It was initially set in Paris while we were living there for a few months in 2013 / 14 and I returned to Australia and set it in Sydney. But the finished stories still have hints of their previous settings.

Here are some location images I took in Lone Pine. Dad's cabin was influenced by the cabin in the picture.



After much searching around on Google Maps Street View and Satellite View to find an Australian town that has the same open, edge-of-the-desert feeling, I came across towns such as Forbes, Lightning Ridge and Broken Hill (the town name in the story of Broken Ridge is part Lightning Ridge, part Broken Hill).

I settled on my town being inspired by Mildura, on the NSW/Victorian border. It's on the edge of the desert without being in the desert, and it's large enough to support a private school like St Augustine's. I needed this so that the school would be large and wealthy enough to hold an event that would raise hundreds of thousands of dollars in a day.

The original Lone Pine setting of the book also inspired Dad's love of antique guns and bushranger narratives in the story, since Lone Pine is where all the old American western movies were shot. Here are some more photos I took for inspiration.



What other research did you need to do?

Writers often need to get specialist advice on certain aspects of their story, and this one was no exception.

I talked to author Fleur Ferris, who used to be a police officer, and she helped me with the kind of language police officers might use, as well as checking that events and actions in my story felt realistic to what might happen in real life, for instance after Dad is caught following the service station robbery.

I also had to learn the differences between theft, robbery and armed robbery in the eyes of the law.

Questions and activities

- What other story possibilities can you come up with if you imagine a boy whose dad is a criminal and whose mum is a police officer?
- Research Australian towns, and write a scene of a story set in that town. Use Google Maps Street View to find a local landmark that could feature in your story, such as a building, park or statue.
- Research the difference between theft, robbery and armed robbery in sentencing. Do the distinctions make sense to you? Why is armed robbery treated as a more serious offence, for example?



WRITING STYLE

Language

Tristan says: I use words to paint pictures in the reader's mind of what is happening in the story and what the character is thinking, feeling, seeing, smelling, touching and tasting. I try to find unique and authentic detail, to not use clichés when I am describing things. That doesn't necessarily mean using big words or getting out the thesaurus. A lot of the time, it means trying to imagine myself in the situation that the character is in. To really put myself in that position and imagine what I would do. This allows me to discover fresh ways to describe things.

Here's an example of the way the dust storm in the story is described in one scene: *'The wind yowls through gaps in buildings'* (p. 183).

I could have said it howls or blows or I could have just said, 'It is very windy'. But the word 'yowl' came to me and I looked it up – 'a loud, wailing cry' – and that seemed perfect and unexpected. It's not a big word or a particularly impressive word. But it tells us what Nash can hear, not just what he sees.

Questions and activities

- How many other examples can you find of ways to describe the dust storm? (Hint: Try looking on pages 157, 182, 189 and 190.)
- Write a short story about someone else experiencing the dust storm in this small town, and what they see, hear, taste, smell and touch.

Pacing

One of the most difficult aspects of writing is pacing – the rolling out of information in the story so that the reader knows enough to be intrigued and to want to turn the page to find out what happens next, but not so much that they are weighed down by information or they know everything upfront.

Questions and activities

- Can you identify certain threads of the story that we learn more about as the story progresses? Make a list of what we learn and when about these story threads:
 - Dad's criminal history.
 - What Mum knows about what Dad is doing.
 - Nash's development as a runner and his relationship with Mrs Diaz.
 - Nash's feelings about what is right and wrong and what he is prepared to do to help Dad.

- Now examine each thread and speculate on why the author chose to withhold or reveal information at a particular point. What story purpose does the revelation of that information have?

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Ethical dilemmas



Nash's dad lets him in on a big secret and asks him not to tell Mum, not to tell anyone. Nash goes along with it, scared for his mum and dad's lives, for his own life.

Nash's parents are also making decisions about the ethical dilemmas they face, from the perspective of a parent, a former boxer, a police officer and a person who has been blackmailed by a threat.

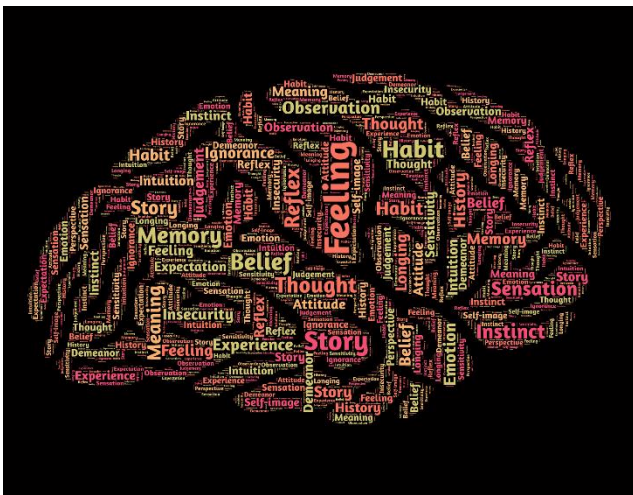
Questions and activities

- Does Nash do the right thing? Is he correct in his judgement to go along with Dad? Should he have told Mum earlier? Would that have made any difference? If you were in the same position, what would you do?
- Identify places in the story, particularly in the first few chapters, where Nash's dad makes bad decisions. What is his motivation?
- Why does Nash want to believe and trust his dad, and what changes his mind?
- Write three different story synopses exploring what might have happened if Nash had made different decisions along the way. How would the story have been different if:
 - Nash told Mum about the two men and what they'd threatened, when he saw her the next day?
 - Nash didn't go back to Dad's house at all after Dad was caught following the service station robbery?
 - Nash didn't help his dad with the school robbery by finding out more about the office safe?



- What do you think about the decision Nash’s mum makes, and what Mrs Diaz says about ‘A mother bear will do whatever is necessary to protect her cub’ on p. 224? Does that protective nature of a mother justify Mum’s actions? Consider also what Mum tells Nash about the larger covert police operation looking into the criminal activity of the two men and the people they work for in Chapter 35. Does that justify her actions? What would a court of law or a jury have to say about her actions?

Nash’s inner and outer worlds



A book gives the reader insight into a character’s inner world and thoughts in the way that a movie or TV series cannot. A voiceover can help in movie or television but, still, we don’t get the same intimacy and understanding of the character that a book provides.

Even at the most exciting and action-packed parts of a story, we get glimpses of what the character is thinking and how the outer world influences their thoughts. Finding a balance between the inner and outer worlds – not purely showing action with no insight into the character, but also not purely getting stuck inside the character’s head with no action – is one of the most important aspects of good writing.

Activities

- Use **Worksheet: Inner and Outer Worlds** to mark in highlighter, or underline, the parts of the story that are outer action and dialogue and, using a different colour or method, mark the parts that express the inner world of the character.
- Now, set yourself five minutes on a timer and see if you can write an action-based scene that shows what is happening in the outer world but balances that by sharing the character’s thoughts and unspoken reactions. You might want to use the setup of a bank heist or armoured truck robbery if you need an idea to get you started.

- Go through and mark your own story up, showing the inner and outer world. And whenever you write a story try to maintain that balance – keeping the story moving forward while also giving intimate insight into your character’s hopes and fears and inner world.

Relationships and conflict

None of Nash’s relationships in the story are easy. The job of the writer is to explore conflict and trouble, so if the main character gets along with everybody really well and never has any problems, it becomes boring.

But, in life, we have conflict with people, too. Think about your own relationships with friends and family. Are they always smooth sailing or do people say things that annoy you? Do you say and do things that annoy other people? Have you ever had an argument with a friend? Have you ever not done the thing that your parent wanted you to do?

These are the real-life relationships I try to explore in *Cop & Robber* but, in the story, the stakes are high. Arguing with a friend (Griff) could mean that Nash’s secret gets out. Not listening to a parent or telling a lie could mean life or death.

Questions and activities

- Have a think, or a conversation in class, about Nash’s key relationships in the book and how they progress from the first chapter with that character through the middle to the end.
 - Nash and Dad
 - Nash and Mum
 - Nash and Griff
 - Nash and Mrs Diaz
- You might want to ask questions like:
 - What do we know about their relationship from their first scene together?
 - What is the main problem in their relationship?
 - How does Nash deal with the problem in the relationship?
 - Does he always make the right choice? Does he always make the wrong choice? Or is it a mix? How does this compare with real life?
 - How does each relationship change throughout the story?
 - By the end, are all the relationships resolved? Do we get to a point where we feel as though the problem has been solved and everyone lives happily ever after? Or are some things left open? Why did the author make those choices?



Conflicting emotions

Nash often feels two things at once and this causes inner conflict for him.

Here's an example:

'Are you gonna be okay?' Nash asks, but Dad's eyes close again. Tears spit from Nash and drip down his face to his neck.

'I love you,' he says to Dad. And, at the same time, he's filled with so much anger. He never realised how much you could love and hate someone at the same time.
(p. 193)

Tristan says: I like uncertainty in a story. I like situations that make it difficult for a character to decide what to do. I often feel torn in two directions and I'm terrible at making decisions, so maybe that's why my characters have such terrible dilemmas that they have to work through. I am not someone who just makes a decision and sticks with it no matter what. I turn over all the possible responses in my mind. I decide on something then interrogate it and decide that it's a terrible solution. Then I decide the other and interrogate that.

Questions and activities

- Do you ever feel this way? You love someone, but they also make you really angry?
- Can you find other examples in the book of Nash's emotions conflicting?
- Does it help the story to have these inner conflicts or does it just make it muddy and confusing? And if it's muddy and confusing, does that help us to understand the way the character feels or does it make the story unclear?
- What other stories have you read or films have you watched that feature characters with complex, conflicting emotions?

Forgiveness

'But it's not your fault,' Mrs Diaz says. 'You're a child . . . As a child, you are supposed to be able to trust that the people who look after you will make good choices and have your best interests at heart.' (p. 223)

'Well, you are going to compete on Monday. And you are going to run your heart out. It took enormous courage for you to tell me this . . . You are forgiven and you can forgive yourself and you can spend your life showing forgiveness to others. Even, one day, to your father.' (pp. 224–225)

Forgiveness is a key theme of the resolution of the story, with Nash needing to choose whether to see his father again after his actions, as well as whether to forgive his mother. Other characters also need to forgive Nash for his actions.

Questions and activities

- Should Nash forgive his father? Why/why not?
- Should Nash forgive his mother? Why/why not?
- Should Mrs Diaz allow Nash to stay at the school? Examine her motivations and why she makes the decisions she does, and how the events of her own childhood have affected her career choices.
- Read the following quotes about forgiveness, and write a persuasive piece arguing in agreement or disagreement with the sentiment in the quote. Find evidence for your claim.
 - *'Selfishness must always be forgiven you know, because there is no hope of a cure'* – Jane Austen
 - *'It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.'* – Francis of Assisi
 - *'It is easier to forgive an enemy than to forgive a friend'* – William Blake
 - *'I can forgive, but I cannot forget, is only another way of saying, I will not forgive. Forgiveness ought to be like a cancelled note – torn in two, and burned up, so that it never can be shown against one.'* – Henry Ward Beecher

Class, opportunity and privilege

The admin block is the oldest building at St Augustine's – important-looking, with dark timber walls and high ceilings. Paintings of principals with angry eyebrows, dating back to the 1800s, look down on him. All men, right up till Mrs Diaz. (p. 117)

When I think about my writing, class-consciousness and opportunity are ideas I write about unconsciously across *Two Wolves*, *Detention*, and maybe even the Tom Weekly series.

In *Cop & Robber*, Nash leads three lives: 1) the fairly civilised, respected world of his mother, a high-ranking police officer in the town; 2) the rough-and-tumble, less educated world of his father, who had a tough family life, whose own dad died early, who is at the mercy of his own impulses, whose boxing career was based on his physical strength; and 3) his private school, which feels upper-middle-class, really, a school for the kids of doctors and lawyers. Nash feels isolated from these children from more privileged and wealthy backgrounds, and feels that the other students do not share many of his concerns.

Griff is a character who perhaps allows us to see the differences in class and opportunity when compared to Nash. He is carefree and eats lots of junk food and is not as focused with his running as Nash, but he still trusts that he will be Australia's best long-distance runner, that everything will be okay for him.



We learn that Mrs Diaz, was in a position not unlike Nash's when she was thirteen years old, but a generation on, she has created a sense of comfort and belonging in her son, an ease with the relative luxuries of the school and the opportunities that he has. However, Mrs Diaz can recognise in Nash the kind of concerns and issues he is facing, and she wants to encourage Nash to use any opportunities he can find, such as his running. She also offers Nash forgiveness.

Questions and activities

- How does his class identification and moving in between the three different 'worlds' of Mum's home, Dad's home and school affect Nash?
- Is running a sport that crosses all classes? Why/why not?
- If you have read Tristan's other books such as *Two Wolves* or *Detention*, identify places where class-consciousness plays a role in the story. For instance:
 - In *Two Wolves*, why was the sudden large amount of cash in their bank account worth upending their whole lives for Ben's parents?
 - In *Detention*, how did Dan's home life living in a caravan park affect the story? Compare the opportunities, or lack of opportunities, available to both Dan and Sima in the story. In what additional ways is Sima disadvantaged?

THEMES AND SYMBOLS

The dust storm



'But he pushes on, digging in for another minute, eyes watering, coughing up globs of salivary dirt, before he emerges onto the main street and a cross-wind hits him like a sandblaster. Hundreds of tiny grains scratch his eyeballs. He rubs them and sandpapers his eyes. Tears pour down his face. He blinks again and again, trying to wash the dust away.' (p. 183)

Questions and activities

- What role do you think the dust storm plays in the story? Imagine the story without the storm. What if there was the race and the robberies, but no dust storm? What does the dust storm add?
- What do you think the dust storm says about Nash's situation or his state of mind? Does it reflect or contrast anything that Nash is feeling?

Running, sport, competition and motivation



Nash doesn't run in order to win. He does it because it makes him feel good. He doesn't necessarily try to be front of the pack because he has to crush the competition. He does it for the feeling of freedom, seeing open space in front of him. He hates feeling boxed in.

Nash runs not for outside approval but for his own positive feeling. Tristan Bancks feels the same way about writing. He was able to write about Nash knowing he's a runner because it's similar to how writing feels for him. Writing is the first thing Bancks thinks about when he wakes up: 'It's like breathing to me.'

Questions and activities

- Often, we play sport purely to win. Write down or have a class discussion about other reasons to play sport. Why do you play sport? What happens when people are too obsessed with winning? Is it possible to be obsessed with winning but to do it in a healthy way?
- Find and discuss the motivations different characters in the story have for choosing running as their form of exercise – for instance, Nash, Mrs Diaz, and Griff. What is different for each person, and what is similar?
- Is there anything that you do purely for the positive feeling it gives you? Not to win or to be appreciated by others, but because it feels like part of you and you can't help but do that thing, and the act of doing the thing is its own reward. What is it? Write



a short piece describing how that activity makes you feel.

Bumbling crooks



My son and I love looking up stories about criminals who are not the smartest crims ever. While I am driving, he will look up news stories about bumbling crooks that make us both laugh.

Here are some examples and you'll see that I have mentioned or used some of these crimes as inspiration for some of Dad's bumbling crimes in the book:

<https://www.smoothradio.com/features/dumbest-criminals/#:~:text=A%20retired%20couple%20from%20Lancashire,underwear%20and%20bought%20some%20groceries.>

Activities

- Can you think of any movies or books about bumbling criminals?
- Have you read or seen any news stories about criminals who have given themselves away really easily?
- Could you write a story about a not-so-smart criminal who either gets caught easily or, perhaps, the fact that they don't know much about crime allows them to elude police? Maybe they're so unconventional that police can't work out what they're going to do next?

Bushrangers

Nash's great-great-great uncle is rumoured to be bushranger Ben Hall. Dad wants to be just like him. The fair is bushranger-themed and a teacher says that the area was flooded with bushrangers in the 1800s.

Questions and activities

- Why do you think the author chose to have this thread running through the book?
- How do bushrangers resonate with some of the key themes the author explores in the novel?

- Who was Ben Hall? Was he a 'goodie' or a 'baddie'? Or do people disagree on whether he was a criminal or a hero?
- Is Nash a criminal or a hero in the story?
- How does Nash's journey of doing the wrong thing in order to try to do the right thing resonate with this aspect of Australian history?
- The way Nash's dad sees it, the service station and the school and the bank can afford to lose a little money, whereas he has none. Is this right? What do you feel about people with few or no resources taking a little from businesses that have a lot?

Nash's theft

When Nash goes to the firing range with Mum, he goes to buy a drink and decides to steal a Snickers. He doesn't have to. He has money, but he wants to know what it feels like. He dares himself to. If he's going to help his dad commit a robbery, then surely he should be able to take a chocolate bar.

Questions and activities

- How did this chapter make you feel?
- Have you ever been tempted to steal something? How did that make you feel?
- Does it matter that he took the bar?
- Soon after this scene, he goes to the P&F meeting with Dad and he reveals to the reader that he buried the chocolate bar in the bin under three bags of garbage. He also decides that he can't help Dad commit the crime. He wants to get out of town. Do you think the Snickers scene at the firing range played any role in his decision not to help Dad? If so, how?

CREATIVE WRITING

Transcribing a story

Some writers, when they're learning how to write, will transcribe, or write word-for-word, an entire chapter of another writer's book whose work they admire. They do it so they can understand, intimately, how that writer does what they do.

Have a go at copying, word-for-word, the first few paragraphs of *Cop & Robber*. Just read them and either write them into a notebook or into a document.

Write down what you noticed about the writing. Here are some of the things you might want to consider.

- **Sentence length.** Were the sentences short or long? Were they the same length, sentence after sentence, or did they vary in length?



- **Word choice.** Is the vocabulary complex or are the words fairly simple?
- **Character.** What do we learn about the main characters in those few paragraphs?
- **Meaning and ideas.** What are some of the ideas the writer is starting to explore?
- **What is the tone?** Is it dramatic and serious or light and funny?
- **Pacing.** Is it fast-paced or slow and steady? How does the writer set the pace of the story? What tools do they use
- **Dialogue.** Is there any dialogue? If not, how does the writer keep the story moving forward?

Turning points

Writing can be very challenging. Writing a 50,000 word novel and keeping the reader interested is difficult. You might write a great beginning that intrigues the reader. But what do you do after that? What happens next? And next?

I see the story in three acts – **Act One or Beginning** (1/4 of the story), **Act Two or Middle** (1/2 of the story) and **Act Three or End** (1/4 of the story). But that middle act is where things can go wrong and the story can become boring, so I also break the story into four quarters. The mid-point helps me to do this.

1. First quarter up till the first-act turning point.
2. Second quarter up to mid-point.
3. Third quarter up to second-act turning point
4. Fourth quarter to the end of the story.

One of the key things writers do is place markers or turning points at key moments in the story. You might know what your opening is and what you imagine the climax of the story will be, but you don't know the rest.

Here are the key turning points in *Cop & Robber* that really allowed me to work out the shape of the narrative.

- **Opening scene.** This sets the tone for the story, introduces our key characters and shows us Nash's world. In *Cop & Robber*, this is Dad's service station robbery.
- **Inciting incident.** This twists the story, takes it in a new and unexpected direction and creates a major problem for the character. In *Cop & Robber*, I saw the inciting incident as the moment when we discover that Mum is a cop and she arrests Dad.
- **First-act turning point.** This is the climax of the first act (first quarter) of the story and sends us over into the second act or middle of the story. In *Cop &*

Robber, this is when the bad guys make their threat: 'Three days to pay or you're dead' and Nash dedicates himself to finding a legal way to pay them their money.

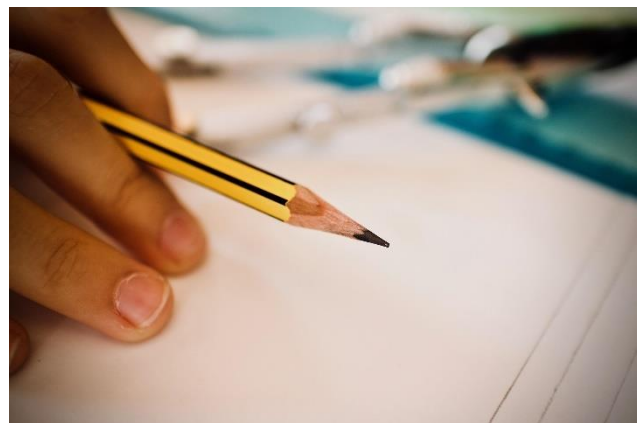
- **Mid-point.** This is a really useful turning point because it divides up that long second act of the story and allows you to spin the story in a totally different direction, right in the middle. A good mid-point should be the opposite of your first-act turning point. In *Cop & Robber*, the mid-point is when Nash says, 'Okay, I'll do it.' He has failed in his quest to come up with a legal way to pay the money and is compromising everything he believes in order to help Dad commit a crime.
- **Second-act turning point.** This is the climax of the second act or third quarter of the story and sends us sailing towards the resolution. For me, the second act turning point in *Cop & Robber* is when Nash catches Dad doing the crime at the school and he sees his Mum. This occurs just as the dust storm is really hitting the school and creates lots of questions for Nash which he must solve in the third act. He does this by following Mum out into the storm and discovers exactly what his parents have been up to.

Writing challenge

- Take a story that you have written and break it down into thirds or quarters and work out where your major turning points are. And if you don't have some of the turning points, this exercise might help you to push your story to the next level.

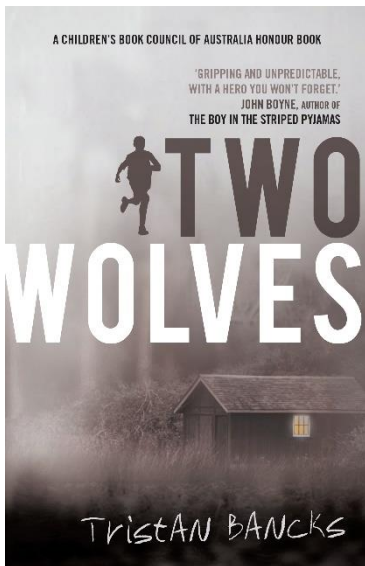
Alternative activity

- If you don't have a story you've written recently, perhaps you want to choose a short story by an author (Tristan's Tom Weekly books have about ten stories in each book) and see if you can break that story down and identify the key turning points.



You can find more of Tristan's creative writing exercises in the [Teachers' Notes](#) for *Two Wolves*.

FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



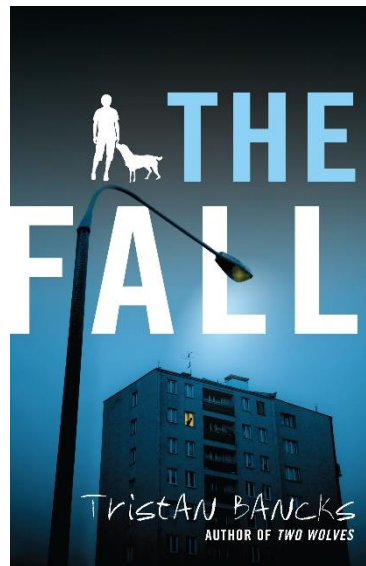
Two Wolves
by Tristan Bancks

One afternoon, police officers show up at Ben Silver's front door. Minutes after they leave, his parents arrive home. Ben and his little sister Olive are bundled into the car and told they're going on a holiday. But are they?

It doesn't take long for Ben to realise that his parents are in trouble. Ben's always dreamt of becoming a detective – his dad even calls him 'Cop'. Now Ben gathers evidence and tries to uncover what his parents have done.

The problem is, if he figures it out, what does he do? Tell someone? Or keep the secret and live life on the run?

Teachers' notes available.



The Fall
by Tristan Bancks

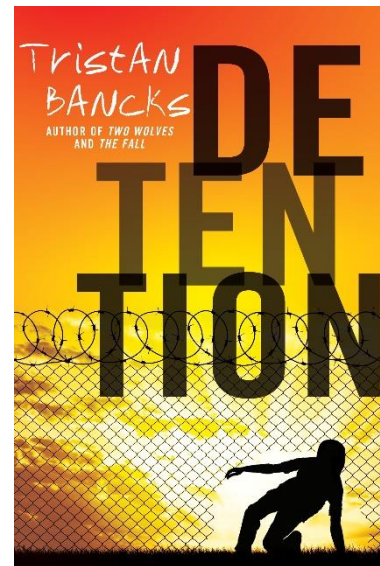
In the middle of the night, Sam is woken by angry voices from the apartment above.

He goes to the window to see what's happening – only to hear a struggle, and see a body fall from the sixth-floor balcony. Pushed, Sam thinks.

Sam goes to wake his father, Harry, a crime reporter, but Harry is gone. And when Sam goes downstairs, the body is gone, too. But someone has seen Sam, and knows what he's witnessed.

The next twenty-four hours could be his last.

Teachers' notes available.



Detention
by Tristan Bancks

Sima and her family are pressed to the rough, cold ground among fifty others. They lie next to the tall fence designed to keep them in. The wires are cut one by one.

When they make their escape, a guard raises the alarm. Shouting, smoke bombs, people tackled to the ground. In the chaos Sima loses her parents.

Dad told her to run, so she does, hiding in a school and triggering a lockdown. A boy, Dan, finds her hiding in the toilet block.

What should he do? Help her? Dob her in? She's breaking the law, but is it right to lock kids up? And if he helps, should Sima trust him? Or run?

Teachers' notes available.

WORKSHEET: Inner and outer worlds

In this abridged extract, use a highlighter or coloured pen to mark or underline the parts of the story that are **outer action and dialogue** and, using a different colour, the parts that express the **inner world of the character**.

Metallic distortion screeches over the outdoor speakers. ‘Shopper at pump five, please be aware that there’s a potentially armed man at number seven who has robbed the station. Police are on their way.’

Mrs Diaz looks up at Dad’s truck. Nash can see her in the rear-view. She holsters the nozzle, sloshing fuel down the front of the pump, then gets into her car and reverses, tearing out of the driveway, skidding sideways across the two-lane road with a high-pitched rubber scream.

One thing is clear to Nash: Mrs Diaz is an incredible driver. He wants to tell Griff tomorrow but figures it’s probably best not to mention it.

Now it’s just Nash, Dad, the shopkeeper, and four kilometres of desert night between them and home. Not home, Nash thinks. He never wants to think of this place as home.

In the way-distance, a siren sounds. Nash feels a wave of nausea wash over him and his head throbs. ‘Help!’ Dad pleads.

Nash searches under and down the side of his seat, before he catches the silvery glint of Dad’s keys hanging from the ignition.

‘Dad!’ he says, pointing.

That’s the thing with Dad. He’s a sunglasses-on-his-head kind of guy.

He turns the engine over and stomps on the accelerator. Bruce Springsteen, Dad’s favourite, bursts from the speakers – something about being born to run – as the ute jerks forward with a squeal of tyres. Police lights speed through the night towards them.

Rather than turning right onto Broken Ridge Road, Dad spins the wheel left and says, ‘Hold on.’

They race past the ice machine, the firewood and the tyre pump, towards a timber fence about two metres tall. The siren’s loud now.

‘Dad?’ Nash says, realising what’s about to happen.

‘Sorry, Nashy. It’s the only way.’

Nash clutches the armrest. The truck gathers speed. Nash places his other hand on the dashboard and presses his feet hard into the rusted metal floor.

There’s a sign on the fence that says ‘99c Doughnut and Coffee!’ with a picture of a doughnut with arms and legs, grinning, like it can’t wait to be eaten. Or driven through. Nash looks across to Dad, whose face is set, vice-tight, for impact.

The engine snarls and the fence explodes with an almighty crack. The metal sign clangs against the windscreen, scrapes the roof and clatters into the tray at the back with the pumpkins. Shattered fence palings fly all over the place. The Holden launches off the edge of the petrol station’s concrete platform.

Nash’s stomach flies into his throat as the truck’s nose tips forward. They’re airborne and going to flip. He knows it. He’s screaming. He doesn’t mean to, but the sound roars up from inside him. Dad’s arms are dead straight and he has a white-knuckle grip on the wheel. His eyes are wide like he, too, knows the truck’s going to flip.

They land with a crunch of suspension on a steep, grassy hill. They bounce right, then left. Nash sees pumpkins leap for their lives out of the back of the truck as it hits the bottom of the hill. The front bumper scrapes flat ground hard and Nash jolts forward, sending pain shooting up his neck into his skull. They speed over clumps of desert grass in the direction of a dark wall of trees.

‘Wish we’d filmed that!’ Dad hoots.

Nash glares at him. Dad thinks he’s a modern-day bushranger and says they’re related to Ben Hall, one of Australia’s most famous bushrangers. But right now Nash is finding it hard to see Dad as an outlaw hero or a national treasure. He just looks like a straight-up crim.

(Extract from Cop & Robber pp 6–9)



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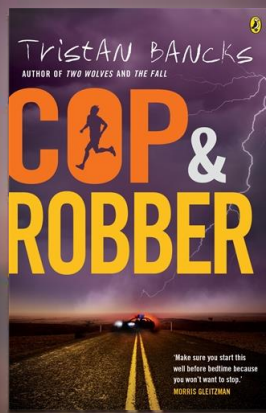
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TRISTAN BANCKS



READING GROUP QUESTIONS

If your mum was a **COP
and your dad was a **CRIMINAL**
who needed your help to commit a crime,
would you do it to save him?**

1. If you were facing the same dilemmas as Nash, what would you do differently?
2. Why does Nash want to believe and trust his dad, and what changes his mind?
3. Mrs Diaz says, 'A mother bear will do whatever is necessary to protect her cub'? Does this justify Nash's mum's choices? What would a court of law or jury say?
4. Writers explore conflict – none of Nash's relationships are easy. But that reflects real life, too. Think about your own relationships. Have you ever argued with a friend? Have you ever disagreed with a family member or disliked their decisions? How did you resolve the conflict?
5. Nash makes a split-second decision to steal a chocolate bar, testing how it makes him feel. What was the result? Have you ever been tempted to steal something? How did you feel?
6. Forgiveness is a key theme of *Cop & Robber*. Should Nash forgive his father? How about his mother? And should Mrs Diaz allow Nash to stay at the school?
7. Tristan says, 'My son and I love looking up stories about criminals who are not the smartest crims ever.' What is the silliest story you've seen or read featuring a bumbling crook?
8. Dad idolises bushrangers, and the school has a bushranger-themed festival. Why are bushrangers so legendary in Australian history? What do they symbolise to Australians?
9. Often, we play sport purely to win, but there are other reasons and motivations. Why do you play your chosen sport or exercise? How important is winning to you?
10. Tristan Bancks feels the same way about writing that Nash does about running. Writing is the first thing Bancks thinks about when he wakes up: 'It's like breathing to me.' Is there anything that you do purely for the positive feeling it gives you?

