

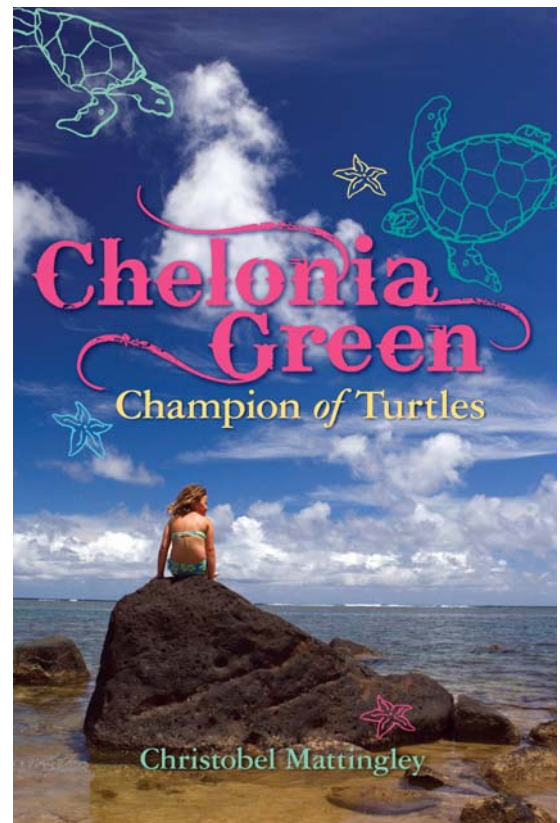
Teachers Notes
by Jean Yates
Chelonia Green,
Champion of Turtles
Christobel Mattingley

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Recommended for ages 8 – 12 yrs

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83 Alexander Street
Crows Nest, Sydney
NSW 2065
Australia

PO Box 8500
St Leonards
NSW 1590
Australia

ph: (61 2) 8425 0100
fax: (61 2) 9906 2218

info@allenandunwin.com
www.allenandunwin.com

Allen & Unwin PTY LTD
ABN 79 003 994 278

PLOT SUMMARY

Michelle Braddon and her parents live on an island off the coast of Queensland. Chellie is fascinated by the discovery of green turtles on the island and adopts their scientific name, Chelonia, as her own.

Chellie lives an idyllic, peaceful existence until one day she is shattered to discover a dead loggerhead turtle on one of the beaches. Realising that human behaviour and carelessness were to blame for the destruction of the beautiful and endangered animal, she sets about doing whatever she can to protect these animals.

Chelonia Green is beautifully but simply written, making it easily accessible to students in Years 5-6. However, the environmental issues it contains make the book a suitable springboard to initiate these sorts of thematic discussions with middle to upper secondary students.

INVESTIGATING CHARACTERS

ENGLISH

- What sort of person is Chellie? Give evidence from the novel to support your opinion.
- Do you think that Chellie is lucky to live on this island? What sorts of things do you think she misses out on?
- What sort of relationship does Chellie have with her parents?

The turtles obviously have an enormous impact on Chellie, as she even goes so far as to name herself after them.

- What is your great interest? What name could you adopt to reflect this passion?
- Choose an item that is of great significance to you and (if possible) bring it to class. Give an oral or written presentation on this object and why it is significant to you.
- Select 5 items that sum up what makes you the person you are. Place them in a bag. In small groups, pull out each of the items and have each person write a character profile of you. How different are these profiles?
- As a group, select 5 items that you think represent Chelonia Green.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Write a prose description of Chellie's island.
- Now write a description of where you live.
- In what ways has your environment helped to shape the sort of person that you are and the type of interests that you have?

Chellie does her lessons through the school of Distance Education.

- What does this involve?

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

Research Distance Education. What sorts of people do you think would benefit from this sort of education? Do you think this would be a good way to go to school? Would there be any bad aspects of this type of education? Make a list of the differences between traditional schooling and distance education. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of each? Would a person schooled through distance education have different skills from someone with a more traditional education? Explain.

When Chellie is ready for secondary school she will need to leave the island and go to boarding school. What aspects of this might she find difficult after doing her primary schooling through Distance Education?

Chellie seems to have a lot of freedom on the island. Do you have the same level of freedom? What aspects of your society might increase or limit your freedom?

Chelonia Green is clearly a highly motivated person.

- Why do you think she is so motivated to protect the turtles?
- Do you think her attitude is typical or atypical of young people?
- Can one person's voice and behaviour really make a difference?

LEARNING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Chelonia Green lends itself very well to cross-curricular studies, especially in the areas of English, SOSE, Science and Personal Development.

Many of Chellie's school lessons are devised around things that she does on the island. Think of some creative activities through which she could learn English, Maths, Science and Social Studies.

ENGLISH ACTIVITIES

Collect images of nature and an island setting. Make a list of words or phrases that come to mind when you look at these images. Try to think of words that appeal to all five senses – touch, taste, sight, smell and hearing.

Collect some poems that depict nature. Try to mould your own words and phrases into a poem.

Collect some images of pollution or destruction of nature.

Make a list of words or phrases that come to mind.

In what ways are the words different?

Write a poem about this.

In what ways is this poem different – consider word choices, pace, use of or lack of poetic devices etc.

SOSE / GEOGRAPHY ACTIVITIES

One of Chellie's great concerns is that her environment is rapidly changing.

Activity: Select some items that could be placed in a time capsule that represent your current environment.

Prediction: Do you think these same items will be common in 10 years time?

Will they be common in the next generation (30 years time)? Why or why not?

Chellie describes the key landmarks or features of her island. Make a list of the characteristics of each place.

LANDMARK	DESCRIPTION
Turtle Beach	
Oystercatcher Cove	
Snowy Beach	
Lion Head	
North Beach	
Orchid Beach	
Home Beach	
Pine Cove	
Pine Beach	
South Beach	
Curlew Beach	

'It was the direction from which the wind was blowing that decided the one to visit' (p5).

- Why would the wind direction have an impact?

Chellie used to go searching for treasure at high tide.

- What sort of treasure is she talking about? Is she looking for jewels and coins?

SCIENCE ACTIVITIES

Research task:

There are 2 different types of turtles on Chellie's beach - green Turtles (Chelonia) and Loggerhead Turtles (Caretta caretta).

Research both types of turtles and present your findings in a table.

	GREEN TURTLES	LOGGERHEAD TURTLES
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE		
SIZE		
DIET		
LIFE EXPECTANCY		

Chellie describes four turtles all of which have injuries. Make a list of the injuries she describes. What do you think might have happened to each of these turtles?

TURTLE	INJURY	POSSIBLE CAUSE OF INJURY
SCARBACK		
NICKY		
FLIP		
FLOP		

Turtles, like so many other species, are under threat of extinction because of changes in their habitat both on land and sea.

Research task:

Research the drop in the size of the turtle population.

Loggerhead turtles are officially regarded as being close to extinction. What does this mean? What are the criteria for listing a species as officially endangered?

What other animal species in Australia are officially classified as being endangered?

What are the ramifications of this (eg. are there any special laws about capturing or killing endangered animals?).

Chellie tells us that only one in 1000 turtles will make it to adulthood. What are the threats facing turtles? Create a table (both from the information contained in the novel and from further research).

THREATS FACING TURTLES TODAY	
NATURAL PREDATORS	MAN-MADE THREATS

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Research tasks:

1) Research the breeding and egg-laying patterns of both Loggerhead and Green turtles.

Chellie mentions that after the turtles lay their eggs they return to their original feeding grounds which may be up to 3000km away. Why do turtles travel such vast distances to lay their eggs?

2) Make a list of all of the man-made things that Chellie finds washed up on the beach. Explain how each of these items could be harmful to the turtles, or to other wildlife.

ITEM	POTENTIAL DANGER

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

The island setting has an enormous impact on this story.

- Are environmental issues as important for city people?
- What sorts of issues might city children be more likely to focus on?

Devise your own environmental campaign.

- What message do you wish to get across?
- What species is in danger?
- Which groups do you need to get your message across to?

MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Research what different wildlife organisations currently exist and what each one does (eg. Wildlife Warriors, Greenpeace etc)

As a class group, select one of these organisations and do something together to support them. This may include a fundraising project, asking the organization for stickers that you can then encourage people to display, writing an article about their work in your school newspaper or magazine, creating an awareness club at your school etc.

ADDITIONAL WRITING ACTIVITIES

1) Examine the genre of the book review. Write your own review of *Chelonia Green*.

They say that “a picture is worth a thousand words.” If this is true, then book covers must have a significant impact on the reader. Consider the role of a book cover. What information does it need to contain? What is its purpose?

Do you like this book cover? Why / Why not?

Design your own cover for this book.

2) The visitors to Chellie’s island tell her that they plan on starting up an ‘Adopt-An-Island Scheme’. Devise your own campaign. What information would you need to give people to encourage them to do this? How could you motivate people to become involved?

3) Examine the genre of newspaper articles.

Write the newspaper article Mark wrote, with the headline “Chelonia Green – Champion of Turtles”.

4) Make a poster that can be placed near beaches reminding people what should be done in order to protect the wildlife.

FURTHER READING

Jenny Overend *Stride’s Summer* Allen & Unwin 2007 – the story of Stride and his pet cockatoo captures the world of a boy on the cusp of adolescence learning about grief, change, acceptance and letting go.

Colin Thiele *Storm Boy* New Holland 2003 – Australian classic which tells of the strong bond which develops between a boy and a pelican as they explore the wild and wonderful coastland of the Coorong.

John Nicholson *The State of the Planet* Allen & Unwin 2000 – a ‘condition report’ on the state of the world’s environment, arranged in four chapters: earth, air, water, energy.

Al Gore *An Inconvenient Truth* (Young Readers edition) Bloomsbury/Allen & Unwin 2007 – this edition of Gore’s bestseller on global warming provides information in a direct and compelling way for the 9-14 age group.

Sally Odgers *Kayak!* Angus & Robinson 1992 - One of the series of Bandinangi books for children. Bandinangi is a small Tasmanian town where anything can happen. This time one of twin brothers disappears with his kayak. He is transported into the future where he is tried for neglecting the environment.

Allan Brown and Kim Toft *Turtle’s Song* (picture book) UQP 2001 – poetic narrative of the life cycle of the Green Turtle, beautifully illustrated.

ABOUT THE WRITERS

CHRISTOBEL MATTINGLEY

Christobel Mattingley passionately believes that one person can make a difference. In 1963 she wrote a letter to Community Aid Abroad in Melbourne enquiring how she could start a home group in Adelaide. She was immediately asked to start the movement state-wide, which she did. As a result South Australia became the second state committed to CAA’s program helping communities in Third

World countries, with over 20 more groups run by other people. CAA is now part of Oxfam, and almost half its Australian members are young people.

Her book *The Battle of the Galah Trees* (1974) is based on her own campaign to save a centuries-old gum tree from destruction by road widening. The great tree is still standing and she sometimes takes students to see it. It needs the whole class holding hands to encircle its huge trunk. *Lizard Log* (1975) is another story where one child's actions make a difference to the environment. Her biography of bushman Deny King, *King of the Wilderness* (2001), came about through her involvement in the action to save the endangered orange-bellied parrot.

Christobel has been a member of the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Wilderness Society almost from their inception. She is also a long-time supporter of Australian Bush Heritage, World Wide Fund for Nature, the South Australian Conservation Council and Birds Australia, and some appeals by Greenpeace. She frequently writes letters to politicians on environmental and social justice issues, and takes part in marches and rallies.

JEAN YATES

Jean Yates is a Secondary teacher of English and History who has taught in Queensland and the UK. For five years she was the Director of the Somerset Celebration of Literature, Writers Festival. Jean now works as a literary consultant for a number of organisations, including the Queensland Government, encouraging and promoting the use of literature in the classroom.