



# THE SHARK CALLER

ZILLAH BETHELL

TEACHING PACK FOR AGES 9+ / KS2

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This Teachers' Pack encourages children to step into the enchanting world of THE SHARK CALLER, the beautiful book by Zillah Bethell. It has been split into three sections, mirroring the three sections in the book, providing suggestions for a Unit of Work.

Each section refers to important events and discussion points in the story, suggests cross-curricular activities, and includes a 'spotlight' extract taken from the text. Extracts are accompanied by corresponding questions that encourage children's reading skills.

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## ABOUT THE BOOK


Desperate to become a shark caller to avenge the death of her parents, Blue Wing is instead charged with befriending the island's infuriating newcomer, Maple Hamelin. At first they are both angry, each harbouring a secret and resentful of the other's world. But when the tide breathes the promise of treasure, can they overcome their differences and brave the deadliest shark in the ocean?

Illustrations by Saara Söderlund



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zillah Bethell was born in the shadow of the volcano Mount Lamington in Papua New Guinea. She grew up without shoes, toys or technology; consequently she spent a lot of time in the sea, swimming and in canoes – and occasionally, to earn money, she took tourists gold-panning in the highlands of Wau and Bulolo. Zillah's family returned to the UK when she was ten, and she was eventually educated at Oxford University and now lives in South Wales with her family. You can read more about Zillah's time in Papua New Guinea at [usborne.com/Quicklinks](https://www.usborne.com/Quicklinks)



PAT NAMBA WAN:  
THE SAND

# SECTION 1 P7–139

## PAT NAMBA WAN: THE SAND

PAGES & READING QS	THEMES & REFLECTIONS	CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY
<p>P.36–37: IDENTITY   HOME</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does Blue Wing feel about her old room?</li> <li>• What can you tell about the person who is moving in?</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider the theme of IDENTITY. What can you tell about Blue Wing, and what can you tell about this new person, from the description? Write down your ideas.</li> <li>2. Reflect on what your HOME means to you. In a template of a house, write down all of the things that are important in creating a good and safe home.</li> </ol>	<p>Art, Design &amp; Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw your own bedroom.</li> <li>• How does it represent your IDENTITY?</li> <li>• What is on the walls? How is it decorated?</li> <li>• What photographs or pictures are there?</li> <li>• Share your room with your classmates.</li> </ul>
<p>P.83: BLUE WING &amp; MAPLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What sort of relationship do Blue Wing and Maple have?</li> <li>• Why does Blue Wing find Maple 'too difficult'?</li> <li>• Why might Maple have been crying?</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider the theme of FRIENDSHIP. Do you think Blue Wing and Maple might grow to be good friends? Why or why not? What are the barriers between them?</li> <li>2. Reflect on your own friendships. Do you have any friendships that had a rocky beginning? Write a perfect "Friendship Recipe", showing the ingredients of a brilliant and long-lasting friendship.</li> </ol>	<p>Music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a soundtrack to Blue Wing and Maple's conversation here.</li> <li>• How can you show the different personalities of both characters — what they show on the surface, as well as what they might be hiding beneath.</li> </ul>
<p>P.97: SHARK CALLING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the author portray the 'magic' of shark calling?</li> <li>• How is the art of shark calling shown to be a spiritual or religious practice?</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The magic of SHARK CALLING is central to the story. Using the description on these pages, write down or act out the stages or RITUALS that Siringen performs.</li> <li>2. Can you think of any similar RITUALS in your own life, culture or religion? How do you get the impression that Siringen worships the sharks?</li> </ol>	<p>Religious Education   Geography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out some research into the ancient art of Shark Calling in Papua New Guinea.</li> <li>• What are the cultural and spiritual aspects of it?</li> <li>• Why do some villagers in Papua New Guinea worship the sharks?</li> </ul>
<p>P.137: XOK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is Xok a victim of human behaviour?</li> <li>• Why is Xok a 'damaged' shark? What sort of things does Xok do, and why?</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The theme of how humans treat SHARKS is very important in the book. What do you know about sharks? How many different species of shark can you name?</li> <li>2. Create a series of Shark Fact Cards to share with your classmates. Include facts about the different species, their features, size, food and any threats to survival.</li> </ol>	<p>Science: Biology   Geography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the effects of some human behaviour on the oceans and the sharks that live there?</li> <li>• Write a Pledge for how you will help to protect the sharks in your daily life e.g. by reducing your plastic.</li> </ul>

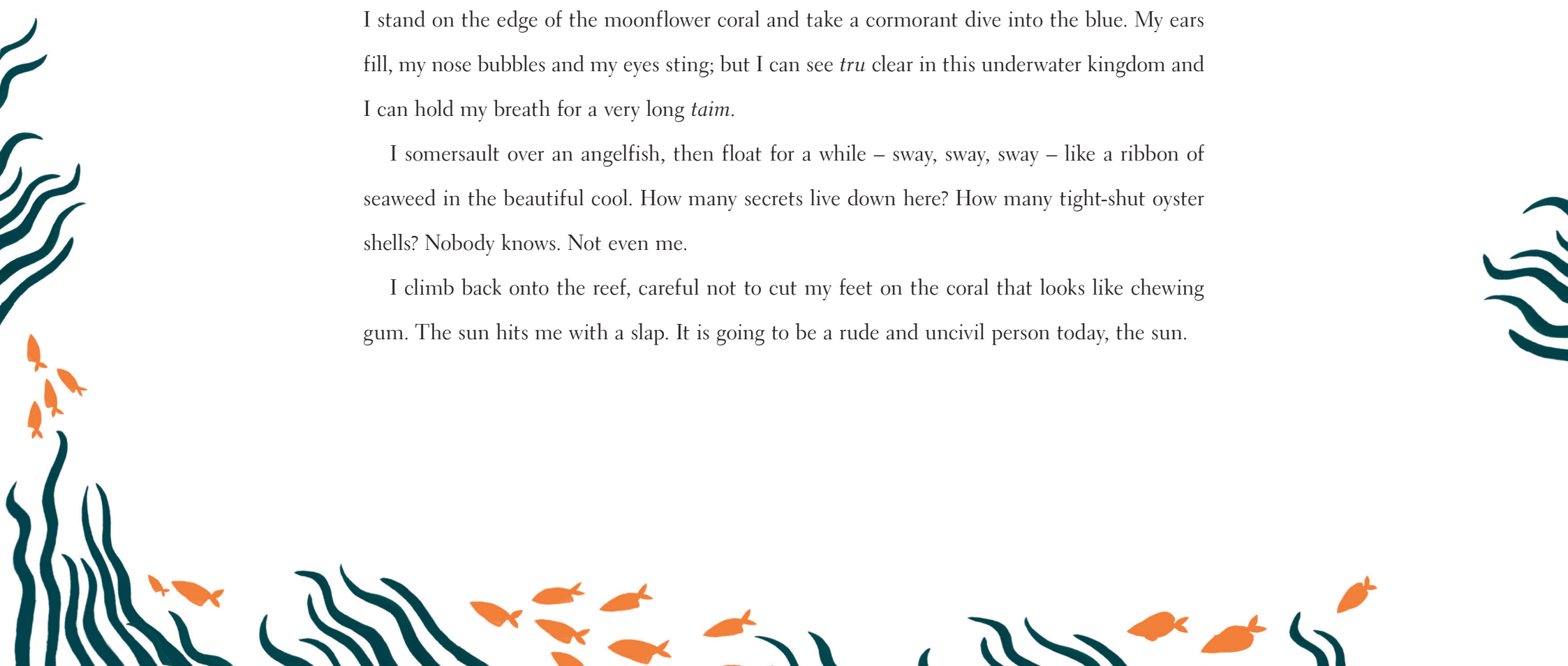


## SPOTLIGHT EXTRACT FROM SECTION 1: 'THE SAND' SETTING THE SCENE (BLUE WING – page 7)

I stand on the edge of the moonflower coral and take a cormorant dive into the blue. My ears fill, my nose bubbles and my eyes sting; but I can see *tru* clear in this underwater kingdom and I can hold my breath for a very long *taim*.

I somersault over an angelfish, then float for a while – sway, sway, sway – like a ribbon of seaweed in the beautiful cool. How many secrets live down here? How many tight-shut oyster shells? Nobody knows. Not even me.

I climb back onto the reef, careful not to cut my feet on the coral that looks like chewing gum. The sun hits me with a slap. It is going to be a rude and uncivil person today, the sun.



# DIVE INTO THE TEXT

## VOCABULARY

- Two Papuan Pidgin words are used in this passage: 'tru' and 'taim'. What do you think they might mean?
- What does 'cormorant dive' mean in the context it has been written? What is a 'cormorant'?
- Find a phrase that shows Blue Wing feels confident under the water.
- Define 'uncivil'.

## RETRIEVE

- Where is Blue Wing? What is she doing?
- What are Blue Wing's skills?
- What happens when Blue Wing dives underwater?
- What is Blue Wing compared to when she floats in the water?
- Why is Blue Wing 'careful' when she climbs back onto the reef?
- What does the sun do to Blue Wing? What does this tell you about the sun?
- What is Blue Wing's relationship with the natural world around her?

## PREDICT

- Predict why Blue Wing might be on her own in this passage.
- Predict what sort of skills Blue Wing will show in the story.
- Predict an adventure that Blue Wing might have.

## ACTIVITY

- Draw or craft this scene. How can you recreate the sights, sounds and colours that Blue Wing describes? How can you show the underwater scene in contrast to the 'rude and uncivil' sun? Carry out some research into Papua New Guinea to help you to create your scenes.

## INFER

- What characteristics do you think Blue Wing has, judging from the opening line in the extract?
- Why do you think Blue Wing says: 'Nobody knows. Not even me.' What does this suggest about her?
- Can you find a phrase that shows Blue Wing has good knowledge of her surroundings?
- How can you tell that Blue Wing has a good sense of humour?
- Do you think Blue Wing is resilient? Why? Do you think she might be rebellious, too?
- What sort of personality does Blue Wing give to the sun? Why does she do this?

## EXPLAIN

- What impression do you get of Blue Wing?
- Explain what happens when Blue Wing dives into the water.

## SUMMARISE

- Summarise what happens in the extract in less than 50 words.



PAT NAMBA TU:  
THE SEA



## SECTION 2 P143–235

### PAT NAMBA TU: THE SEA

PAGES & READING QS	THEMES & REFLECTIONS	CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY
<p>P.172: SIRINGEN'S SECRET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the secret that Siringen reveals to Blue Wing here? Why do you think he chooses to reveal it?</li> <li>• Why is the secret important?</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The theme of SECRETS is important in the story. Why do people keep secrets? Have you ever kept a secret? Discuss your ideas with a friend or classmate.</li> <li>2. How are RELATIONSHIPS tested when secrets are kept or revealed? Write a prediction for how you think Siringen's relationship with Blue Wing might change.</li> </ol>	<p>RSHE &amp; Citizenship   Drama</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Keeping a Secret is the same as Lying'. Do you agree with this statement?</li> <li>• In groups, carry out a debate about this topic. Give everyone the chance to speak and make sure everyone listens carefully.</li> </ul>
<p>P.182: THE SHARK ROADS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the 'shark roads'?</li> <li>• How do you get the sense of the vastness of the ocean?</li> <li>• What is the mood between the two friends here?</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Blue Wing explains: 'Sharks prefer some parts of the sea to the others'. Why do you think this could be? List a few possible reasons.</li> <li>2. What do you know about life under the OCEAN? What different creatures live there? Draw some of your favourite ocean creatures!</li> </ol>	<p>Science: Biology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an ocean fact-file showing the different layers of the ocean (Twilight Zone, Midnight Zone, Trench, Abyss), and the creatures that live there.</li> <li>• In which zone might you find the sharks in the story?</li> </ul>
<p>P.190: REVENGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is happening in this passage? How does Zillah Bethell increase tension?</li> <li>• What does Blue Wing fantasise about doing here?</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Throughout the story, Blue Wing looks for REVENGE against Xok for killing her parents. Why do you think she finds it so hard to capture him in this passage, then?</li> <li>2. What is revenge? What sorts of things can motivate someone to want revenge? Write a list of possible motivations for wanting revenge.</li> </ol>	<p>Literacy   Drama</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In groups of four, create a freeze-frame of this scene. One of you is Blue Wing and one of you is Maple; the other two group members should speak Blue Wing's inner thoughts, both positive and negative.</li> </ul>
<p>P.210: FORGIVENESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can you tell Blue Wing has conflicted feelings here?</li> <li>• How can you tell something is wrong?</li> <li>• Why does Blue Wing 'start to move towards' Maple?</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How is the theme of FORGIVENESS important in the story? Can you think of some moments where characters show small and big examples of forgiveness?</li> <li>2. In this passage, Blue Wing and Maple quickly forgive each other for the big argument that they had. What does this show about their friendship? Why is it important not to hold a grudge?</li> </ol>	<p>Literacy   Art, Design &amp; Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using the relationship between Blue Wing and Maple as your inspiration, create a collage or poem to show the importance of forgiveness, no matter how big or small. Consider the colours and images you will use to create mood and tone.</li> </ul>



## SPOTLIGHT EXTRACT FROM SECTION 2: THE SEA SIRINGEN'S SECRET (TENPELA — pages 172–3)

“Waspapi...”

“Please, Blue Wing. Let me finish my tale. Xok went into the *kasaman* and I tightened the rope. He struggled hard and fought against it. I have never seen a shark fight so hard in my life. The sea was white with his struggle. But he never went to sleep. All the *taim* the *kasaman* was around him, he fought. Never giving up.

“So, I paddled over to him, my spear ready to take his life. I stood up in the canoe, trying not to fall out because the waves he was making were too quick and tough. I stood up and held the spear above him...”

“But I could not do it.”

I cannot say anything.

“You see, Blue Wing. He had never come to me before. I have been out on these seas for many, many year, and I have seen many rogue sharks. And none of them have ever come to my calling. That was when I knew that Xok was *not* a rogue shark. That he is a shark like plenty of others. Only, he is hurt. Damaged by the people who fear him.”

There is no sound in my ears except the sound of the waves on the beach.

“After a *taim*, he broke the *kasaman* in two and swam away. Out into the ocean.”

“You let him go,” I whisper.

“What?”

“I said, you let him go.”

Inside, my heart has an anger like no other anger before.

Siringen looks like a frightened old man. But that doesn't stop the anger.

“You let Xok go. And then he swam into the shore and killed my mama and my papa!”



# DIVE INTO THE TEXT

## VOCABULARY

- What is a synonym for 'damaged'?
- What is a kasaman? Why is the kasaman important in the passage?
- Find a phrase that shows the shark fought against Siringen.
- Define 'rogue'. What does the phrase 'rogue shark' mean in this context?

## RETRIEVE

- How does Siringen capture Xok?
- In the extract Siringen explains: 'I could not do it'. What could he not do?
- What did Xok do that he had never done before?
- How does Xok get away from Siringen?
- What did Xok do after escaping from Siringen?
- How does Blue Wing feel about what Siringen is telling her?
- How does Siringen feel about Blue Wing's reaction to his story?

## PREDICT

- Predict what Siringen will say next.
- Predict how Siringen and Blue Wing's relationship will develop from here.
- Predict whether Blue Wing will come to understand Siringen's decision.

## ACTIVITY

- Can you think of a time where one of your close relationships was tested? Did someone do or say something that hurt you? Write a list of emotions that you felt. Then consider how you came to forgive your person. Why was it important to forgive him or her?

## INFER

- What clues does the author give you that Siringen finds it hard to tell this story?
- Why do you think Siringen couldn't kill Xok?
- What does Siringen mean when he describes Xok as 'damaged'?
- Why do you think Blue Wing 'whispers' in response to Siringen's story?
- Why do you think Blue Wing has 'no sound' in her ears 'except the sound of the waves on the beach'?
- How is the relationship between Blue Wing and her Waspapi portrayed here?

## EXPLAIN

- What does Siringen reveal to Blue Wing here?
- Explain what happens to Xok in this passage.

## SUMMARISE

- Summarise what happens in the extract in less than 50 words.

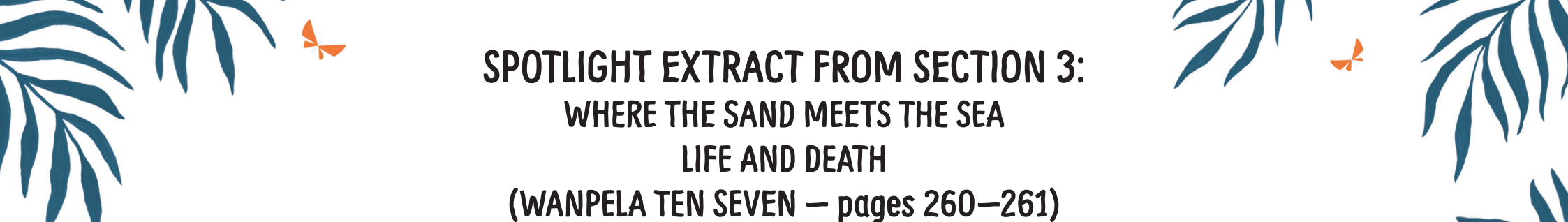
PAT NAMBA TRI:  
WHERE THE SAND MEETS THE SEA



# SECTION 3 P239–358

## PAT NAMBA TRI: WHERE THE SAND MEETS THE SEA

PAGES & READING QS	THEMES & REFLECTIONS	CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY
<p>P.261–2: GRIEF   LOSS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is Mr Hamelin 'holding on to'?</li> <li>• What does Siringen think Blue Wing will stop doing if she 'waits for taim'?</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is GRIEF? What is the thing that heals grief, according to Siringen? Write a reflection on what Siringen says in this passage. What do you think of it?</li> <li>2. Can you think of a time that you have lost someone or something precious to you? Try to take yourself to that moment and write a diary entry showing how you felt.</li> </ol>	<p>RSHE &amp; Citizenship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw an outline of a person. Imagine this person is grieving. On the outside of the outline, write down how a person physically shows their grief. On the inside, write down any feelings they might have.</li> </ul>
<p>P.269: DEATH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• -What does Blue Wing describe about 'death'?</li> <li>• What does Maple believe?</li> <li>• Where does Maple think her mum is?</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What does Blue Wing say about the 'different ways of thinking about death'? Ask your classmates about their religions and cultures, do they have different ways of thinking about death? What do you think?</li> <li>2. Fold a piece of paper in two; on each side, draw how Maple describes 'heaven' and 'hell'.</li> </ol>	<p>Religious Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various cultures and religions have different beliefs about death. Choose one and present it to your classmates. Do you think there are 'different ways of thinking about death', like Blue Wing says?</li> </ul>
<p>P.285–6: THE ISLAND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does Zillah Bethell use sensory description to portray the island?</li> <li>• What does Blue Wing mean when she says: 'The water keeps the truth from view'?</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In this passage the author, Zillah Bethell, contrasts what we see on the sand versus what we don't see in the sea. Why is this theme of CONTRAST or DUALITY important in the story?</li> <li>2. Think about how Zillah Bethell creates contrast here to show the differences between the sand and the sea. What contrasts can you find?</li> </ol>	<p>Literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinking about the idea of duality – what other contrasts can you find in the story? Make a list of all the doubles that you can think of. Then, compare your list with a classmate. Discuss why each duality is important in the book.</li> </ul>
<p>P.291: TIME</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does Maple mean when she says: 'Everything depends on something else'?</li> <li>• Does Blue Wing agree or disagree with Maple?</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider the theme of TIME or TAIM in the story. How is it important? Using a piece of string, trace Blue Wing's story backwards and forwards to show what she has experienced.</li> <li>2. Then, use a piece of string to show Maple's journey. Where do the two pieces of string intersect?</li> </ol>	<p>History</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is "history"? How does Maple define it? Show your own history by creating a chronological timeline of what you did yesterday, last week, last year – or even of events</li> </ul>



**SPOTLIGHT EXTRACT FROM SECTION 3:  
WHERE THE SAND MEETS THE SEA  
LIFE AND DEATH  
(WANPELA TEN SEVEN – pages 260–261)**

His eyes move away from me like he might have said too much.

Then he says some more.

“Grief is the thing that can make a person change most, I suppose. When...” He looks out over the sea that flickers and glows with the phosphorescence. “When my wife died, I was still only young. *She* was only young. Twenty-two year. She got sick one year after we got married. Then a few months afterwards, she died.

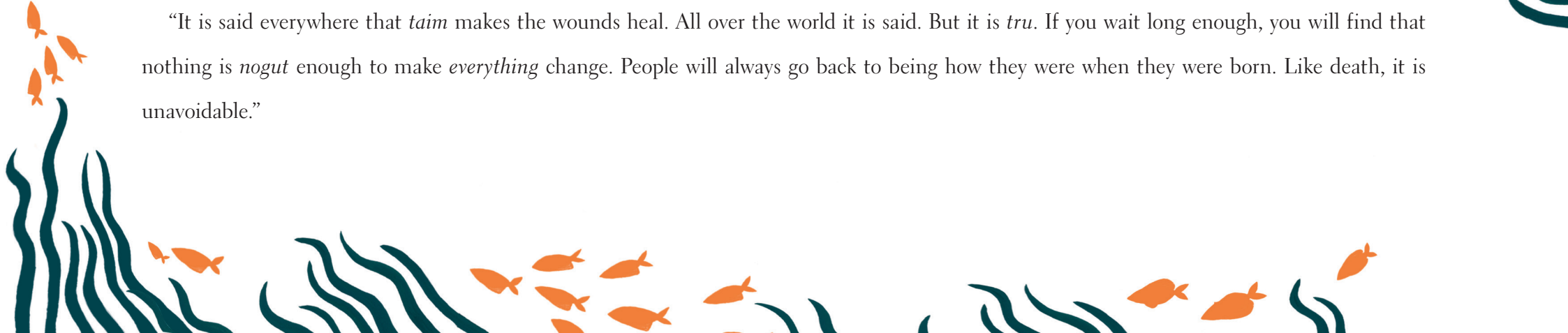
“For a long *taim* I was angry. People in the village would know to keep away from me. Not look at me. I spent long days out on the ocean, alone. The sharks were the only things to flatten my anger enough.

“Then, slowly – so *tru* slowly – I got *mobeta*. I did not have to do anything to make it happen. The anger just started to seep down into the ground until, at the end, it wasn’t inside me any more.

“It had gone.”

I say nothing. These are the *namba wan* words that Siringen has ever said to me about his wife. I do what Siringen does with the Bigman, but for different reasons – I just listen.

“It is said everywhere that *taim* makes the wounds heal. All over the world it is said. But it is *tru*. If you wait long enough, you will find that nothing is *nogut* enough to make *everything* change. People will always go back to being how they were when they were born. Like death, it is unavoidable.”





# DIVE INTO THE TEXT



## VOCABULARY

- Identify the Papuan Pidgin words used in this passage. What do they mean?
- What is 'phosphorescence'?
- Find a phrase that shows the sea is reflecting the light from the sun.
- Define 'unavoidable'.

## RETRIEVE

- Which important person did Siringen lose in his life?
- How old was she when she died?
- What did Siringen do in the days after his loss?
- What helped Siringen to 'flatten' his anger?
- Which feeling disappeared for Siringen after some time had passed?
- What had Siringen never discussed before with Blue Wing?
- What happens if you 'wait long enough' after you have lost someone?

## PREDICT

- Predict why Siringen might be telling Blue Wing this story.
- Predict how Siringen and Blue Wing's relationship might develop after this.
- Predict how Siringen's story might be connected to Blue Wing or other characters.

## INFER

- How does Siringen feel as he explains this story to Blue Wing?
- Why do you think his 'eyes move away' as he is speaking?
- Why do you think Siringen keeps breaking off what he is saying to look out to the ocean?
- How can you tell that Blue Wing is really listening to Siringen?
- What does the phrase 'flatten my anger' mean?
- Why do you think Siringen is telling Blue Wing this story?



## EXPLAIN

- What is the process of grief, according to Siringen?
- Explain what Siringen says to Blue Wing and how she reacts.

## SUMMARISE

- Summarise what happens in the extract in less than 50 words.

## ACTIVITY

- Using Siringen's story, create a Timeline of Grief, showing the different stages and actions that you might experience if you lose someone you love. Decorate your timeline with images of the sand and the sea. How do the contrasting symbols of sand and sea help you to understand Grief?
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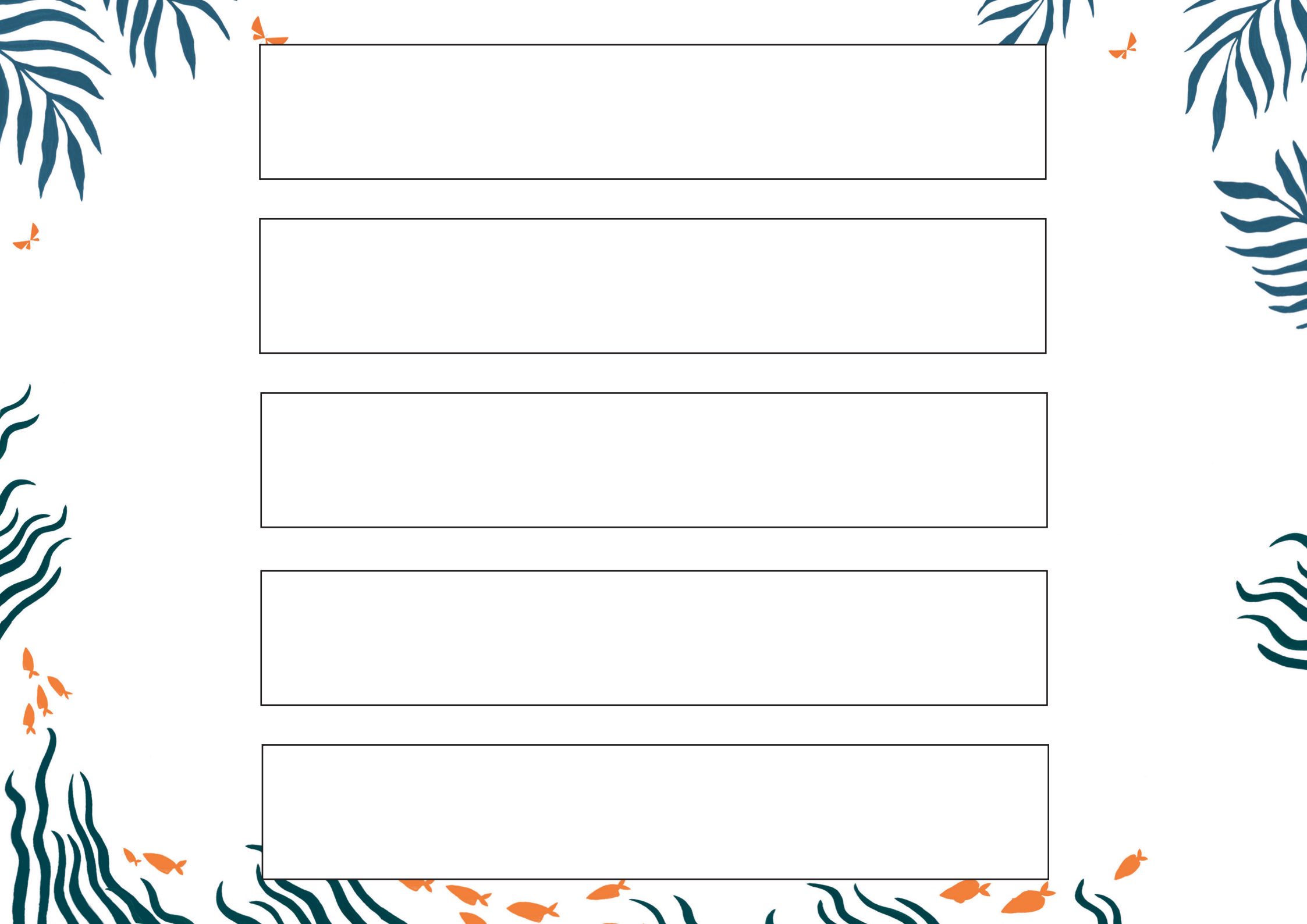
## REFLECTION FOR THE LONG NOW

Cut out as many 'Reflection Paper Chains' as you need. On each strip or chain, either ask any remaining questions you have about the story, or summarise something that you have learnt. Your reflection on each chain could be in-depth or just individual words with accompanying sketches; you can be as creative as you like!

When you have completed as many chains as you want, connect them using tape or glue and hang them somewhere in your classroom to remind you of what you discovered as you joined Blue Wing and Maple in their journey.







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