

## **Teacher notes**

CRYPTOSIGHT

By Nean McKenzie

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nean McKenzie is a children's writer and optometrist who lives in western Melbourne with her husband and two teenage children. Originally from Bendigo, Nean lived in New Zealand, Europe and North East Africa before returning to Victoria.

Nean has a Diploma in Professional Writing and Editing from RMIT. In 2012 she was shortlisted for a Penguin Varuna Scholarship. She currently writes book reviews for the blog Buzzwords Books. In 2016 she was awarded a Maurice Saxby Mentorship for *Cryptosight*, which is her first published novel.

When not writing or testing people's eyes, Nean enjoys running and travelling to interesting places around the world. She also likes bush walking and reading books, especially those for 8-12-year-olds.

## ABOUT THE BOOK

### **Synopsis**

Thirteen-year-old RAFFERTY KAMINSKI and his younger sister ZARA, are in the South Australian Flinders Ranges, when their cryptozoologist father disappears. BIG JIM, a family friend arrives to tell them about a secret organisation: Investigators of Creatures at the Edge of People's Awareness 'ICEPA', and warn them of a trio of Bunyip hunters called 'the Three'.

However Big Jim falls into a drugged sleep as the RANGER comes to kidnap Raff and Zara. The kids escape and stow away on a school bus.

On the bus to Mildura, Zara finds she can see colours on the extra-terrestrial 'Sark', her father gave her but Raff can't. A teacher discovers the stowaways and takes them to the police station, but they are released. They go with THERESE from ICEPA to investigate a sighting of an ancient mythological Murray river monster. Raff shows signs of *Cryptosight*, an ability to communicate with cryptids.

VIVIENNE (their mum) turns up to take Raff and Zara back to Melbourne. However, she seems to be hiding something. The kids hitch a lift in a truck to the Grampians, to stay with their scatologist grandfather ALEXANDER, who is attacked by a marsupial lion.

At the hospital, Raff and Zara discover their mother's secret but are kidnapped by the 'Three' and taken to the Wombat State Forrest. Raff falls into a golden underground cave, and meets the ancient BUNYIP. He must use his skills in *Cryptosight* and overcome his ant phobia to return to the surface and save his family.

## TEACHERS' NOTES

Things to discuss:

### **Extinction:**

What does extinction mean and what causes it?

What are some famous animals that have become extinct?

What Australian animals are currently at risk of becoming extinct? What can be done to protect these animals?

What sort of evidence shows us about animals that have been extinct a very long time?

**Phobias:**

What is the difference between a fear and a phobia?

Name some famous people who have had phobias?

What are some less common/more interesting phobias?

Is there any treatment for a phobia?

**Gold mining history:**

When did the 'Gold Rush' happen?

Where were the main areas where gold was found in Australia?

What other parts of the world have had Gold Rushes?

Where is gold still found in Australia?

**Illegal wildlife trade in Australia:**

What are the methods in which wildlife is moved out of the country?

Which animals are the most common to be smuggled out of Australia? Who does this?

What methods are being enacted to prevent Australian wildlife from being taken out?

What penalties are there for removal of Australian creatures?

**Character questions:**

Can you find any clues that Vivienne is a police officer?

There is a red herring in the story when Raff suspects Eric as being the Brolga. What does this do to reinforce both his and Zara's characters?

Zara is described as having 'kleptomania'. Is this common? What treatment is there?

Why do you think Alexander is so afraid of Mrs Chalmers?

What are the similarities between Raff and his father? What are the similarities between Zara and her mother?

### **Writing activities:**

1. Write a story about your own made-up creature that no one has seen before. How does it feel to find it? What are its characteristics? Does it resemble another creature or creatures? What would you do if you found one? Would you tell anyone? Would they believe you?
2. Write a story about going back in time and meeting an extinct creature. What kind of creature is it? How different is the world then? What other animals are not around? Is it in danger?
3. What do you think might happen after the end of the story? What do you think has happened to Moon Face? What has happened to the Bunyip? Do you think anyone will be gold mining in the Wombat State Forrest? Does Raff get his mobile phone?
4. Research five 'scats' (or poo) from different animals around the world. Draw them and describe them. How does their size and colour show us what the animal eats? What are the most distinctive animal scats you can find?
5. Imagine you have to pack an eight-day survival kit. What would you put in it and why? Think about the fact you have to carry it around and you won't necessarily have electricity.