Cyclone Christmas by Verity Croker

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Teaching Guide

About Cyclone Christmas:

It’s 1974, and Kirsten is looking forward to Christmas. But this Christmas turns out to be very different, because Kirsten lives in Darwin, Australia, and Cyclone Tracy is coming. Follow Kirsten, her mother, brother David, and dog Chloe in the wild ride they experience during the cyclone, and find out what happens to them when it’s all over.

Verity Croker writes across a range of genres. Her middle grade chapter books, Cyclone Christmas and Block City, have been published by Sunshine Books / Wendy Pye, NZ. Her young adult novels, Jilda’s Ark and May Day Mine are published by Harmony Ink Press in the US. Hot Pot is her debut novel for adults.

She has written travel articles for Journeys magazine, and articles for newspapers. Some of her short stories appear in anthologies, journals and on ABC online. She is also a published poet.

Verity completed her Master of Arts (Creative Writing) at the University of Tasmania in 2013, and worked at UTAS in Hobart, teaching English to international students. She originally trained as a primary school teacher. She is now a full-time author, based in Brisbane.
Discussion Questions and Activities:

HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY:

1) *Cyclone Christmas* is set in Darwin, in the Northern Territory in Australia, and later the family move to Cairns, in Queensland, Australia. Take a look at a map of Australia. Can you find these places? Hint: look to the north and north-east!


3) *Cyclone Christmas* focusses on a famous cyclone in Australia, Cyclone Tracy. Find out more about cyclones, how they form, and what impacts they have on people, animals, and plants. Do some research about Cyclone Tracy in particular.

4) Which parts of the world are most influenced by cyclones? Find them on a world map or globe.

LANGUAGE & WRITING:

1) Write a review of *Cyclone Christmas*.

2) These are the themes of *Cyclone Christmas*:
   - Family
   - Friendship
   - Cyclones
   - Resilience

Can you find examples of these in the book? Do you think there are other themes the author didn’t even realize she was writing about? What are they, and can you find examples of them?

3) What do you think Kirsten, David, and Mum will be doing in five years’ time? Ten years’ time? Write a short story about their future lives.

4) Write about Kirsten’s future relationship with the new girl at her school. Do you think they will become friends?

5) Which character in the book do you relate to most and why? Write a paragraph explaining your reasons.

ART & CRAFT:

1) Kelvin Hawley the illustrator has drawn black and white pictures of Kirsten, Katy, Mum, and David. Draw or paint what they look like to you. Use lots of colours!

2) What does Max from the shop look like? Draw or paint him in his parents’ shop.

3) Can you imagine Kirsten’s home in Darwin? Can you imagine her new home in Cairns? Could you draw or paint these houses? Remember, they are in the tropics.

4) Draw or paint Chloe or Cleo. Or both!

5) Mum was decorating the Christmas tree when Kirsten came home on Christmas Eve. Draw or paint what this tree looked like with all its decorations.

6) Can you illustrate what it would be like in the middle of a cyclone? Let your imagination run wild!

OTHER:

1) What do you think happens to Kirsten and Katy’s friendship? We know Kirsten and her family end up in Cairns, but where do you think Katy went? What about Max from the shop? Where did they end up? Tell your friends what you think.

2) Take this chance to talk to (or write to) your friends about how much their friendship means to you.

3) Do some research about different natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, typhoons, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, mudslides, avalanches, and erupting volcanoes.