Overview

*NIPS Go National* stands alone as a hilarious look at life in a cricket team. It is also the sequel to the highly successful *NIPS XI*. The NIPS reunite with their coach, Spinner, on an invitational trip to Melbourne, to take part in the Harmony Cup. As the captain of the team, Lan experiences a number of problems that he needs to resolve. He loses one of their best batsmen and has to find a new player; argues with his best friend, Izram; has to make difficult on-the-ground decisions; and loses his best bowler, just before playing the Dead Reds in the Cup. Along the way he writes a Captain’s Diary, encouraging his team members to write inspirational poetry, and motivates and guides the NIPS with his detailed Captain Notes.

While offering many funny moments, this book deals with complex issues, such as cultural diversity, friendship, the roles of players in teams, girls playing a traditional male game and sportsmanship. It is suited to early secondary readers and competent upper primary readers.

Author Profile

*Ruth Starke* worked in public relations and travel marketing before turning to fiction writing in 1992. She has since published eleven novels for young people, including the award-winning *Nips XI* and *The Twist in the Tale* in the *After Dark* series. She is co-editor of *Solo Spots* (drama monologues for senior students) and has written a history of the Adelaide Writer’s Week. Ruth teaches English at Flinders University, Adelaide and creative writing at TAFE. She was recently awarded a PhD with first class honours. She is deputy chair of the SA Writers’ Centre, writes and reviews for the *Australian Book Review* and *Viewpoint*, and has been a Judge of the National Festival Awards for Children’s Literature since 1995.

Until she wrote *Nips XI*, Ruth had absolutely no interest in cricket. Now she has posters of Steve Waugh and the World Cup team on her study wall and is thinking of applying for membership of SACA.

*Nips XI* is featured in Reading Enriches Learning, Collection 1: Identity

Focus Questions

- Lan’s greatest sporting dream is to bat for Australia. What is your great sporting dream? (p 5-7)
- How did the NIPS get their nickname? (p 15)
- What does ‘cultural diversity’ mean? (p 17)
- How did Tomas Onya get his nickname? How did they pick up Australian expressions such as ‘spinner’? (p 26)
- Who wrote Spinner the mysterious letter? Predict who sent it and why. (p 28)
- Does everyone celebrate Christmas? What traditions do different cultures celebrate? (p 32)
- Why are the boys worried about Spinner? Do lots of people celebrate Christmas alone? (p 33)
- What nicknames do the Australian cricketers have? Why do we use nicknames for people? How did you get your nickname? How do you feel about it? Why does Ruth Starke use nicknames in her book? (p 34)
- How did the NIPS resolve the problem of finding another cricketer? (p 50-60)
- Why were the phone calls depressing for Lan? (p 60)
- Why is Lan so pleased with his solution and the initiative he used? (p 64)
- What is Lan’s philosophy towards cricket? Do you agree/disagree with it? (p 67)
- Why is Lan secretly relieved that Sam can’t bowl as well as him? (p 78)
- Why is Lan scared about representing his ‘whole nation’? Which nation is he referring to? (p 82)
- Why are Lan’s Captain’s Notes such a motivating tool for the team? (p 116)
- Why did Lan feel embarrassed about getting so many wickets against the Tiwi Islands? Why is Lan a good sport for putting his worst bowler on? How did Izram feel about the decision? (p 120)
- Why is it a different job being a ‘touring captain’ for Lan? Would Steve Waugh or Ricky Ponting have similar problems? (p 131)
- What is upsetting Izram about Sam? (p 144-5)
- Who are the ‘stolen children’ that Jermaine talks about? (p 160)
- Why does Sam think Lan is a good motivator? (p 166)
- What discovery do the boys make about Sam? How would Izram and Lan feel? Was Sam dishonest to the boys? (p 183-6)
- What issues does Lan have to deal with before the championship match? Do you agree with his solutions? What alternatives could he have implemented? (p 197)
- Spinner said, ‘Winning’s not everything’. Do you agree/disagree with this saying? (p 218)
- How does Jermaine show good sportsmanship? (p 240)
- Is Sam an inspiration for girls? (p 247)
- Why was it a ‘bombshell’ for the team to find out about Sam? (p 250)
Assessment

Self-assessment rubric: As a class, students brainstorm a set of criteria that they wish to assess. Criteria could include the following:

- place the series of events in chronological order
- identify the different settings used by the author
- use different forms of writing including recounts, conversations, plays, poetry, songs, job descriptions, jokes, interviews, invitations, menus, scripts, letters, emails and diaries
- identify the introduction, complications and resolutions used within the plot
- discuss the different points of view presented in the text
- identify with the characters by relating it to their own real-life experiences
- recognise the different themes and issues used by the author
- determine how characters resolve their problems
- locate and research information using different sources including learning technologies
- discuss ways the author has used language to convey feelings such as happiness, humour, suspicion and embarrassment
- compare different texts written by the same author.

Portfolio: Collate work samples that students feel demonstrate a high standard. Put pieces of work on display as a special parent evening/lunchtime event.

- Opinion survey: Students answer questions relating to the text. These could include:
  - Did you like *NIPS Go National*? Why/Why not?
  - What do you think was the funniest part? Why?
  - How does the humour used in this book differ to other books you’ve read?
  - What was the most important part of the story for you? Why?
  - What was the main event in the story? How did this affect the main character?
  - What important themes/issues did Ruth Starke discuss in her book?
  - What did you learn from reading the book that you didn’t know about before?
  - Would you like to read more humorous texts or Ruth Starke’s other books? Why?
  - Would you recommend this book to another person? Why? Who?

Peer assessment on use of oral skills: Create a class list of criteria to assess each performance. Discuss what skills are aimed for, so that students know what is expected of them. Skills could be displayed on a reporting sheet upon which peers can jot down notes about the performance. Select a specific skill to focus on during the peer assessment (this often makes it easier to begin with). Include such skills as:

- used expression in their voice
- controlled the volume of their voice.
- looked directly at the audience using eye contact
- answered questions in detail
- kept on track with the talk
- used a variety of sources for their information
- used charts or props to support their talk
- used technology correctly (tape recorders, videos, video cameras).
Activities

READING

Small-group activities
1. Role-play the press conference scene at the train station before the NIPS leave on the Overland train. Include the roles of Lan, Spinner and reporters asking questions about the upcoming Harmony Cup. (pp 82-3)
2. What is Clarrie McGinty’s (Spinner) history? Write some interview questions to ask him about his famous accomplishments. (pp 17, 135-41)
3. Create a calendar like Lan’s. Alternatively, create a calendar of your favourite sport. Include special cultural dates, birthdays and sporting commitments that you have during the year.
4. Design a billboard advertising the Harmony Cup in Melbourne. Include who is playing, venues, dates and the starting times of matches. (p 18)
5. Find out what the different jobs involve on the Australian Cricket Team; including psychologist, fitness trainer, physiotherapist, nutritionist, coach, dietician, manager and media liaison officer. (p 123)
6. Where does the Overland train line take you? On a map of Australia, show where Lan and the NIPS came from to arrive in Melbourne. Locate other famous rail trips such as the Ghan and Indian Pacific. Find out which is the longest trip. Order them in length from shortest to longest on a bar graph. Would the boys, have been bored on the long trip? Why/Why not? (p 86) Visit http://www.trainways.com.au

Whole-class activities
1. What does the message ‘Doing your personal best’ mean? Where did the NIPS show they were trying their personal best?
2. Discuss the meanings of the following sayings: ‘strike me pink’ (p 29); ‘old crocks’ (p 30); ‘get on the blower’ (p 59); ‘nice to have a win under our belts’ (p 123).
3. Make a glossary of the key words, such as: acclimatisation (p 46), diarrhoea (p 82), hospitality (p 86), ambitious (p 91), indigenous (p 94), multicultural (p 94), punters (p 96), consultation (p 101), discrimination (p 110), articulate (p 121), pavilion (p 131). Use a dictionary to locate meanings and write a sentence explaining each word.
4. Research different cultural traditions. What festivals and special events does your culture have? Create a list to share and add to a whole class list. (p 32)
5. Research the history of the MCG (Melbourne Cricket Ground). Refer to the website at http://www.mcg.org.au. Find out how old the MCG is. What was the first match played at the ground? What is it used for now? What famous events have taken place at the MCG? Create a timeline of the famous events. Explain why the MCG is called ‘hallowed turf’. (pp 133-6)
6. Debate as a class whether ‘sledging’ is a good thing for cricket. List the positive and negative arguments for each side. (pp 168-9)
Individual activities

1. Create character profiles for Lan, Jermaine, Spinner, Sam, Izram, Grace and Tomas. Include physical characteristics, strengths and weaknesses.
2. Spinner gives lots of old practice tips for playing cricket. List the positive attitudes a coach must have to help the team. (p 44)
3. Create a tour map for visitors to use when they visit the MCG. What special features should they see? Include diagrams and maps of the ground. Refer to the website at http://www.mcg.org.au (p 96)
4. List the problems Sam and Izram have with each other. Devise some possible solutions for them. (p 159)
5. Describe the ‘Red Kangaroo Service’ the boys travelled on with the Overland train trip. Create a diorama or a cross-section model (looking down on the train without its roof) labelling the special features. Refer to the website at http://www.trainways.com.au for information about the Red Kangaroo Service.

WRITING

Small-group activities

1. Write a radio script for an interview between Lan and KC (disc jockey) for his sports segment, after they come back from winning the Harmony Cup. (pp 55-6)
2. The NIPS’ team song is ‘The Nips are Getting Bigger’. Write a verse, song or chant including this line that the team could sing to celebrate a win or at team events. Design a CD cover to go with the song and include the words in the cover. (pp 89-90)
3. Create a job description for the ‘Game Development Officer’ (Laura). What tasks and skills did Laura need to organise the Harmony Cup? (p 94)
4. Create an itinerary for the NIPS over the few days of their trip to Melbourne. Include day and night time activities that they will take part in. (p 100)
5. Write a front-page newspaper article about the NIPS’ win in Melbourne. Include a headline, illustrations, captions, introduction, paragraphs and a conclusion.

Whole-class activities

1. Lan and the NIPS create many ‘Knock-Knock’ jokes on the train trip to Melbourne. Create your own jokes and combine them to make a class ‘Knock-Knock’ joke book. Illustrate your jokes. (p 87)
2. Make a class chart of amazing cricket records for Australia. Discuss why a ‘hat trick’ is special for a bowler. What achievements do batsmen aspire to? Record your most amazing cricket feat and explain why you chose it. (p 239)
3. Use the cricket glossary at the end of the novel to create a class display, with a series of illustrations of the meanings of the different cricket terms, such as googly, bouncer, bails and ashes. (pp 251-3)
4. Create a grid listing the main characters, settings, main themes, problems and endings. Then list information for both, Nips XI and NIPS Go National. As a class, compare the similarities and differences between the two books, and predict where Ruth Starke would go in the next book for the series. Make a class predictions chart for display in the classroom.

Individual activities

1. Write an official invitation from the Australian Cricket Board (ACB) for the boys to take part in the Harmony Cup. Include a letterhead with the coat of arms (see the website at http://www.baggygreen.com.au).
2. Create a fact file about a famous cricketer. Include name, nickname and how they got it, accomplishments, records, where they come from in Australia and what you admire about them. Check out the website at http://www.baggygreen.com.au for information on the players.

3. Lan used poetry, like in Steve Waugh’s Captain Diaries, to motivate his team. Each member of the team took a turn to write a poem about their experiences (pp 80, 117, 127, 163, 180). Create your own poem that could be used to motivate your sporting team.

4. Create a multicultural breakfast menu for the teams who are staying at St Pauls. Consider the nationalities of the different teams. (pp 109-110)

5. Lan and the NIPS received an Australian Cricket Board show bag when they arrived for the first match. Design your own show bag, including special giveaways, tip sheets (eg ‘How to bat under pressure’), caps, pens, drink bottles and player fact sheets. (p 128)

6. Design a cricket banner to display at the ground supporting the NIPS or other teams in the competition. (p 221)

7. What is Lan’s plan for playing the dragons? Write a captain’s speech incorporating some of his ideas from his captain notes. (p 163)

8. Lan needs to accept the Harmony Cup when they win the competition. Write an acceptance speech that he could use when accepting the trophy for the team. (p 247)

9. Write a postcard to Grace, telling her about the trip to Melbourne.

10. Write an email to tell a friend the news about the matches in the Harmony Cup, the bombshell about Sam or about the friendships that have been made between the different teams.