

NAURU BURNING

An uprising and its aftermath



NAURU BURNING
STUDY GUIDE

MARK ISAACS

PRE-READING INTRODUCTORY LESSON

Assess prior knowledge.

Whole class brainstorms ideas, teacher scribes responses on board as mind maps or dot points.

- What facts do you know about the Australian government's Nauru Regional Processing Centre (Nauru RPC)? What is its purpose?
- What do you know about the riot and fire at the Nauru RPC on 19 July, 2013?
- How are asylum seekers treated at the Nauru RPC?
- Who is in charge of security at Nauru RPC?

Students record the class's responses to compare with their answers to these questions after reading the text.

INTRODUCTORY PAIR WORK

Find Nauru on a map. Describe its location:

- Where is it situated?
- What countries, if any, are close to it?
- What is its size?

INTERNET RESEARCH

Provide a brief history of settlement of Nauru over the centuries and a description of its climate and landscape.



VIDEOS AND PODCASTS

Introduction to the book and the author

Watch the YouTube video Lunchbox/Soapbox:
*Mark Isaacs: Nauru: An insider's account of
Australia's offshore detention policy.*

What are your reactions to Mark and his experiences
at this point?

REFLECTION JOURNAL

At the end of your reading of each chapter, write a
reflection on what you have learned about the build
up to the riot, the breaking point, the riot itself and
all that followed afterwards.

Describe how you have been affected by both
the men's experiences and treatment and also the
comments of the various men about their experiences
and emotions?

CLOSE STUDY OF THE TEXT

These questions could be answered by students individually or used by teachers to guide and focus the discussion of the text.

1 | WHY DO PEOPLE IN IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTRES RIOT?

- Page 7

Explain why the men on Nauru resorted to hunger and thirst strikes.

- Page 8

Why would the Prime Minister refuse to negotiate with asylum seekers who were protesting? Explain whether or not you think this is a reasonable response.

2 | THE BREAKING POINT

- Pages 10 -11

Identify the reasons for the men's frustration over delays in their processing.

- Pages 11-12

What fears and anxieties did the absence of lawyers create in the men?

3 | PLANS FOR A PROTEST

- Page 14

Explain the purpose and the nature of the Tamil protest.

- Pages 15 -16

What evidence is there to suggest that the authorities knew of plans to burn down the camp? Explain the men's confusion over Kevin Rudd's "Papua New Guinea Solution".

4 | THE RIOT

- Page 18

How did Wilson Security learn about the planned march to the airport?

- Page 19

Describe the thoughts and feelings of the Tamils on the morning that Kevin Rudd announced his "Papua New Guinea Solution".

- Pages 19 - 30

Create a timeline of events that took place in the lead up to and during the riot and fire.

Do you think the riot and fire could have been prevented? How?

- Page 22

How did Jane and Jessy try to prevent the riot?

- Page 24

Why was Richard Britten, the Police Commissioner of Nauru, sacked by the Nauruan Minister of Justice?

- Page 28

Explain how television and the mobile phone provider were used to spread fear and anger among the islanders of Nauru.

- Page 30

What methods did the Nauruan police use to decide who were the "guilty people"?

- Pages 31 - 33

Describe how the Wilson Security guards treated the asylum seekers at this point.

5 | THE DOG POUND

Make a dot point summary of the shocking conditions in the 'dog pound'.

Explain your reaction to this description.

- Page 37

"To any request or complaint, security pointed at the wreckage and replied, 'You had everything and you burned it down.' "

To what extent is this true or untrue?

Explain whether this opinion justifies the treatment of the men in the dog pound, the prison and the other camps.

6 | THE PRISON

Describe how conditions in The Prison compared to those in The Dog Pound.

- Page 41

Explain how and why the immigration officer, who came to the prison daily, intimidated the prisoners.

7 | ALPHA, BRAVO and CHARLIE CAMPS

Each camp was designed to hold what the authorities had decided were different kinds of men.

Explain what these differences were supposed to be.

Write a description of conditions in each of the three camps.

Is one any better than the others? If so, explain why.

- Page 48

What were Mustafa's reasons for believing that Wilson Security was responsible for the fire?

- Page 50

The UNHCR visited the camps in October, 2013.

Detail their four findings.

8 | THE INVESTIGATION AND THE COURT

- Page 61

What reasons for the inmates' riot are provided by Lucy Fiske and another person interviewed?

Outline the ways in which the Nauruan government demonstrated that it had little respect for its own judicial system at this time.

- Page 71

"By March, 2015, some 20 months after the fire, not one conviction was secured and no man was legally held accountable for the \$A60 million worth of damages."

What is your reaction to this statement, in the light of the men's treatment by all the authorities after the fire?

9 | THE AFTERMATH

Who is too frightened to talk publicly about the night of the riot and the subsequent investigation?

Why are they so frightened?



10 | CONCLUSION

- Page 75

Read the first paragraph carefully. Is this a fair evaluation of the events that took place? Justify your answer with evidence from the text.

- Pages 75 - 77

Outline the conclusions of the Hamburger review, highlighting where it found responsibility for the riot and fire lay.

What other reasons does Mark also suggest?

- Page 77

Why was the Wilson Security investigation into the causes of the fire "conflicted"?

- Page 77 - 78

Explain how Mark's investigation into the causes of the fire "evolved".



ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1

Find a world map and identify the various countries of origin of the asylum seekers mentioned in the text, using the information provided on pages 79 - 80.

ACTIVITY 2

Class discussion

On page 78, Mark comments that “the concern with a case such as this is that it was destined to be forgotten, the court cases dragged out for months on end so media deemed them old news. Abuses overshadowed by more recent abuses.”

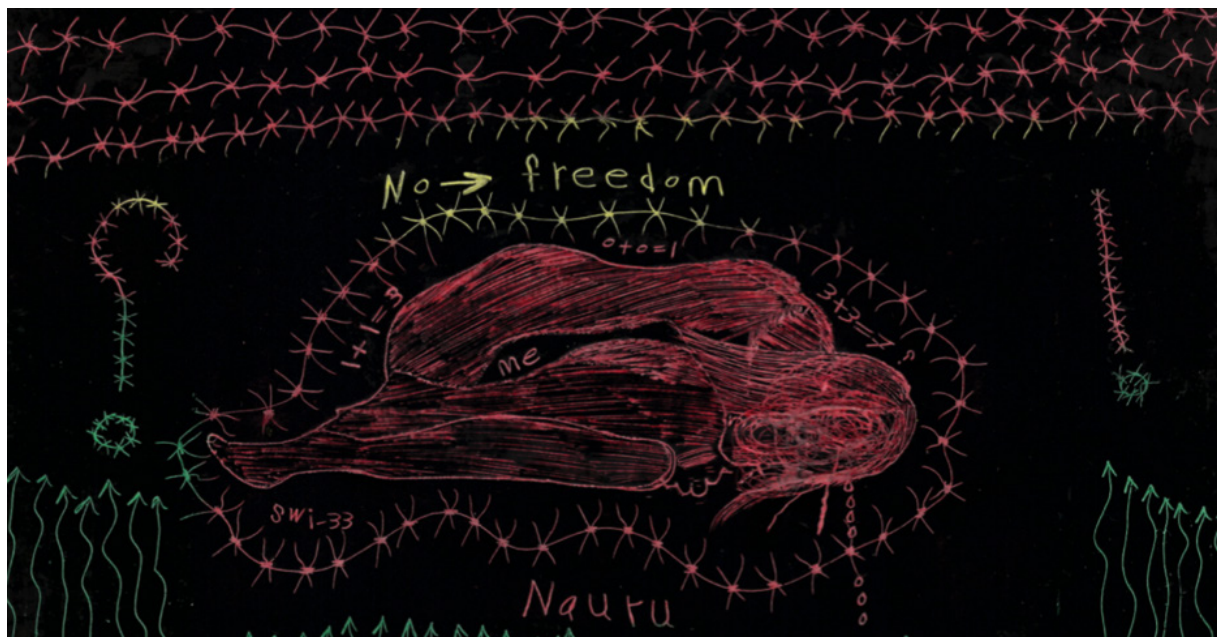
Does this have to be the case or are we now so bombarded with shocking news stories that we have become numb to human suffering?

Share your ideas about how we react to and cope with the 24-hour news cycle in contemporary society.

ACTIVITY 3

Visual literacy activity

Mark has provided this drawing made by one of the asylum seekers on Nauru.



What ideas and emotions does this drawing convey to you?

Explain how visual techniques are used to convey these ideas and emotions.

You may refer to the table on the next page for assistance.

VISUAL TECHNIQUES

Body language and gaze	Facial expression, position, gestures and stance convey the person's attitude, feelings or personality.
Composition	What is deliberately included or left out e.g. surroundings, objects, clothing.
Colour	Colours are used to represent feelings and provoke a response. Red may signify passion, anger or hell, while blue may signify peace, harmony or coldness.
Contrast	The positioning of opposite elements such as light and dark, large and small, rough and smooth, creates interest, excitement or drama.
Orientation or point of view	Is the viewer positioned above the image looking down, below or at eye level.
Positioning	Which objects have been placed in the foreground, middle ground or background?
Salience	Which part of the visual text is your eye first drawn to? The salient image is determined by colour, image and layout.
Symbolism	An image is used to represent one or more idea.
Vectors	A line that leads your eye from one element to another. It may be created by such things as gaze, pointing fingers or extended arms.
Words	Words are deliberately chosen to convey a message.

ACTIVITY 4

Group Work (3 students per group)

Allocate three different characters to each person in your group. Conduct your research independently then share your information with the group. Collaborate to plan and compose your recount of each individual event.

Mark employs the thoughts, opinions and emotions of a variety of men to shape his narrative. He provides cultural background information about each of them on pages 79 - 80.

Identify the thoughts, opinions and emotions of each of these men, then synthesise this information to create a recount of each of the individual events which took place, from the perspective of the men.

Write your recounts under these chapter headings:

- What was the breaking point?
- Plans for a Protest
- The Riot
- The Dog Pound
- The Prison
- Alpha and Bravo Camps.

NAME	CULTURAL BACKGROUND	PAGE REFERENCES
Ketheswaren	Tamil from Sri Lanka	11, 19, 27, 29, 49, 50
Hussain		12, 18, 23, 24, 26, 27, 29, 52
Susu		14, 16, 19, 20, 25, 27, 30, 31
Baqir		15, 26, 30, 37-8,49
Abdullah		16, 17, 23, 32, 39, 40 - 42, 46, 48
Viji		30, 43, 45, 47, 52
Gholam		32, 39, 40, 42, 45
Atash		15, 42
Mustafa		16, 32, 39, 40 - 42, 47

Use the recount template below to help with your written composition.

Remember to use formal language (complex sentences, sophisticated vocabulary, no contractions/abbreviations) and verbs in the past tense.

TOPIC:

SETTING: WHO? WHERE? WHEN? WHAT? WHY?

EVENTS IN THE ORDER IN WHICH THEY OCCURRED

Event 1

Event 2

Event 3

Event 4

CONCLUDING STATEMENT:

ACTIVITY 5

Looking at how Mark uses language to convey his ideas and emotions. From the text, find your own examples of each of the language techniques.

First we must ask: what is the purpose of Mark's text? Through telling this story, he hopes to expose the cruelty and injustice experienced by the asylum seekers before, during and after the riot and fire on Nauru' and seeks to establish the truth about what really happened.

How does Mark engage and persuade the reader about this tragic situation?

- USE OF INFORMAL LANGUAGE

(simple sentences, colloquial vocabulary, contractions/abbreviations).

Informal language is used to create an intimate tone so that readers feel the author is chatting in a friendly fashion to them. This in turn makes the author's comments more persuasive. Mark uses virtually no informal language in this text, except for quotations: "That's how it is, take it or leave it". (page 46)

- USE OF FORMAL LANGUAGE

(complex sentences, sophisticated vocabulary, no contractions).

Mark uses formal language when he is discussing the events that took place on Nauru during 2013 and later. He also uses in when detailing and discussing official policies and legal, governmental and international issues. The use of formal language gives authority and a serious tone to his narrative and comments, creating a text which is persuasive to the reader.

Example:

"The area was tightly managed by security. Everyone sat in plain view of the guards and there were regular head counts. Many men felt that the security guards had become aggressive towards them, irrespective of their involvement or lack of involvement in the incident". (p.36)

Your Example:

- USE OF JARGON

(such as the names and acronyms of various organisations and legal language).

The use of jargon specific to the asylum seeker issue adds authority and authenticity to Mark's comments.

Example:

"The men in the camp raised issues of concern with the UNHCR that included a sense of hopelessness and confusion regarding their RSD process and their future." (page 51)

"Despite the UNHCR visit, in the aftermath of the fire, the rule of law in Nauru slowly started to unravel. In a separate case to that of the fire, Peter Law issued two temporary injunctions restraining the Nauruan government from deporting two residents." (page 56)

Your Example:

- USE OF DIRECT SPEECH

Use of direct speech of the men is a powerful technique to directly involve us in their heart-breaking stories.

This involvement assists in persuading the reader of the misery and frustration felt by the men.

Example:

“We always help, we have positive behaviour, despite this we are treated the worst and left behind”, a leader of the Tamil men said. (page 20)

Your Example:

- USE OF EMOTIVE LANGUAGE

Mark uses words and phrases that provoke an emotional reaction in the reader to convey the sadness, misery and horror of the camp.

Example:

“The horrific conditions and the humiliation on the men’s faces were reflective of a sombre, post-fire depression. One man described it as ‘an African slum mixed with an apocalyptic, end-of-world scenario.’”
(p.35)

Your Example:

- USE OF QUOTATIONS FROM AN OFFICIAL COURT TRANSCRIPT

to create a persuasive and authentic tone to his comments.

Example:

Transcript from *Alshalok v Republic of Nauru*, Case No. 22 of 2014, 9 December 2014, Supreme Court of Nauru, Criminal Appeal Jurisdiction. (pages 66 - 68)

Your Example:

- USE OF RHETORICAL QUESTIONS

Immediately involves the reader as they hypothetically supply the answer – a persuasive language technique.

Example:

“And yet, when people reacted violently against the timeless incarceration, how did we respond?” (page 76)

Your Example:

ACTIVITY 6

Visual Representation

Create a visual representation of the emotional and mental state of the men detained on Nauru, either before or after the riot and fire.

Use any medium – computer generated, created by hand or collated from magazine and newspaper cut outs.

The visual text that you create should clearly convey your ideas through your choice of images and their placement in the frame. Refer to the visual techniques listed below to assist your composition.

VISUAL TECHNIQUES

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ACTIVITY 7

Summative Activity – Essay

In his foreword to *Nauru Burning*, Tim Costello describes its contents as “A shameful story that needed to be told”.

With close reference to the text, explain both why this is a “shameful story” and also the way in which Mark has chosen to tell it.

You should detail and consider:

- The main events which took place.
- The way the men were affected by these events and their treatment by various authorities.
- The reasons Mark provides for the events and the treatment of the men, including the reasons for the men’s feelings and actions and those of the authorities.
- How Mark uses language to convey his ideas and emotions to the reader.

GLOSSARY

Organisations in the text

Add any other organisations whose purpose you are unsure of.

DIAC	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
IHMS	International Health and Medical Services
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
SERCO	A large British company whose activities include running prisons worldwide, including some in Australia. It holds the national contract for Immigration Detention Centres in Australia.

Amnesty International

A non-governmental world-wide organisation focused on human rights.

The Salvation Army/The Salvos

A Christian church that helps the homeless, drug addicts, the unemployed and other people needing assistance.

FURTHER READING SUGGESTIONS

Books

- The Happiest Refugee: A Memoir (2010) by Anh Do
- The Kite Runner (2003) by Khaled Hosseini
- A Country Too Far: Writings on Asylum Seekers (2013) edited by Rosie Scott and Tom Keneally
- The People Smuggler (2012) by Robin de Crespigny
- The Rugmaker of Mazar-E-Sharif (2008) by Najaf Mazari & Robert Hillman
- I am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban by Malala Yousafzai
- The Cage by Gordon Weiss
- Offshore by Madeline Gleeson
- Human Rights Overboard by Chris Goddard, Linda Briskman, and Susie Latham
- Refugees: Why Seeking Asylum is Legal and Australia's Policies are Not by Jane McAdam
- Dark Victory - David Marr and Marian Wilkinson

Movies

- <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/guide-fd.php>
- Chasing Asylum
- Woomera
- Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea
- Mary Meets Mohammad

- Sri Lanka's Killing Fields - Channel 4 -
<http://www.channel4.com/programmes/sri-lankas-killing-fields/on-demand>
- Dheepan
- Cast from the Storm

Online Resources

- Refugee Council of Australia – www.refugeecouncil.org.au
- Amnesty International - www.amnesty.org.au
- Asylum Seeker Resource Centre - <http://www.asrc.org.au/>
- Human Rights Watch - <http://www.hrw.org/>
- Search engine: Country of Origin information -
<http://www.refworld.org/>
- Kaldor Centre -
<http://www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/factsheets>

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