

# Red Dog – year 7 film study

## Unit Title: Why does belonging matter?



### Tall tales and true: Red Dog

Red Dog, as he came to be known started his life with the name 'Tally Ho' which in typical Australian style was quickly shortened to just Tally.

He started out in [Paraburdoo](#) and was born sometime in 1971. The family who originally owned him moved to Dampier and it was here the the legend of Red Dog really started.

Until reaching Dampier Red Dog was just another Kelpie, Cattle Dog cross. He showed signs of his wanderlust early in life but once he reached Dampier his travels really started to reach epic proportions.

Red Dog took to travelling on the local buses. He made friends with one of the local bus drivers but was said to have become very distraught when the driver was later killed in a vehicle accident. Some say the Red Dog spent the rest of his days looking for his lost friend.

How many of Red Dogs antics are folk lore and how many actually happened we will probably never know but it is said that he would board a vehicle and refuse to get off until it took him exactly where he wanted to go.

His eating habits were less than savory causing him to break smelly wind regularly. In the enclosed confines of various vehicles this must have been a testing time for the other occupants.

Red haired people in Australia are often called 'Blue' and so it was that Red Dog also picked up the nickname 'Blue'. It was at Dampier Salt that he got this name and it was this location that he chose to make his home base.

Red Dog was adopted by the workforce at Dampier Salt and they saw to it he was correctly registered with the local council and they tended his wounds after his numerous fights and scrapes.

Not everyone was a fan of Red Dog and on one occasion he was found with two bullet wounds in a back leg. He was taken all the way to Port Hedland for treatment and the trip eventually cost quite a sizeable sum.

His travels are said to have taken him as far afield as Perth and Sandfire but in 1979 his journey came to an end when he picked up a poison bait and eventually had to be humanely put to sleep.

A memorial was erected to the memory of Red Dog and his statue still stands today on a hill overlooking the town.

Red Dog not only has the memorial in Dampier to remind us of his travels but in 2011 the movie 'Red Dog' was released to celebrate one of the Pilbara's most memorable and unique characters.

Reference: <http://www.wanowandthen.com/dampier.html> accessed 3 August, 2012

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***The film begins with Tommy, a truck driver from Perth arriving in the mining settlement of Dampier, in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. Here he meets Jack, the publican of the town's 'watering hole' and one by one the members of this community come to the pub to tell their stories of Red Dog. Red Dog has been poisoned and is close to death. He lies in a room off the main bar while the locals wait for a vet to arrive from Port Hedland.***



**First scene (4.00 to 7.30)**

**Questions to ask students while watching:**

- 1 How does the Director show that the area around Jack and Maureen's car is vast? (aerial shots, wide angle). The Director uses a number of aerial shots in this opening scene. Why do you think he chose to do this?
- 2 How does the Director show that it is dry? How can we tell that it is hot? (heat mirage, dust trails, colours). Describe the colours that you see in the Pilbara. How does these colours add to the feeling of hot, dry and arid conditions?
- 3 Maureen says, 'Why would anyone build a town out here? Why would anyone live in a town out here?' what does this comment tell us about the landscape surrounding them?
- 4 Describe our first meeting with Red Dog. What immediately strikes us about his personality?
- 5 Jack and Maureen are what you could say 'typical Aussies'. What is it about them that make them typically Aussie? (Use the 'Talking Strine' activity)
- 6 What impression do you get of the town and pub when Jack and Maureen first arrive in Dampier? Why has the Director chosen to focus on the sign 'public bar' moving in the still heat of the day?

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Homesick - (7.40 to 13.15)

#### Essential Questions Focus:

- How does it feel to belong or not to belong?
- Why might humans want to connect with other species?



1. How do the other miners respond when Vanno speaks about his hometown, Abruzzi? How many different nationalities does Vanno mention that make up the melting pot of miners in Dampier?
2. What two stories does Vanno tell about how the sun can affect people?
3. We are introduced to three main characters in the film in this sequence – Jocko, Peeto and Vanno. How does the Director show us that these characters are important in the storyline of the film?
4. What does the behaviour of ‘The Ski Patrol’ and Peeto tell us about the *life* that the miners live and their codes of conduct?
5. What ‘rule’ do the miners make for Vanno?
6. Jocko says to Vanno ‘Everyone’s homesick’ – what does this statement reveal about the life for a miner in the Pilbara?
7. What does Vanno mean by ‘a dog for everyone and no one in particular’ when describing Red Dog?

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**Montage** /mɒn'tɑːʒ/ is a technique in **film editing** in which a series of short shots are edited into a sequence to condense space, time, and information.  
Ref: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montage\\_\(filmmaking\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montage_(filmmaking))

### **Vanno and Red Dog become friends (13.30 to 16.00ish)**

In this first montage, the Director shows Vanno's blossoming relationship with Red Dog. The sequence reflects that of a 'love story' with the couple 'getting to know each other' at the beginning, enjoying each other's company, and ending in 'betrayal'.

Points to note:



- How is Vanno presented to us on the beach? Consider the framing of the large ship in the distance, and him sitting by himself?
- Discuss his costume and props – hat, shorts, drinking a long neck beer and eating salami. Why might he be considered an outsider within this community?
- Vanno says to Red Dog, 'You're happy, you have a gift Mr Doggy, I do not'. What does this tell us about what it takes to belong to a community? Compare Vanno's quote with the Cribbages later in the film.
- How does the music change to reflect a change of mood? Discuss rhythm, tempo and lyrics.

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**Question: What does Vanno mean when he says that Red Dog was ‘a dog for everyone and no one in particular’?**



**Nancy (26.00 to 29.05)**

**Essential Question: How does it feel to belong or not belong?**



- 1. Compare this scene to the chapter in the novel, ‘Red Dog’ by Louis de Bernieres.**
- 2. Complete a PMI of your thoughts in how the Director has translated the written text into film. What has been included in the film, what has been excluded and what is interesting?**

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The knitting scene: (29.00 to 31.05)

**Essential question: How can stereotypes influence how we connect with others?**



Discuss how the Director sets this scene up to completely challenge our ideas about how men 'should' behave?

- Music
- Costume
- Dialogue

**What elements in this scene make it so funny? Discuss:**

- Our perceptions of men in their own environment – Peeto's unexpected 'hobby'
- Men relating to men – Peeto relating to John, Jocko and Vanno inviting Peeto to the 'pub'
- Men relating to Red Dog – John wanting Red Dog to be kept busy, Peeto understanding this
- Costume – Peeto alone in his cabin
- Music - 'Jeepers, Creepers' and 'Shadowboxer'
- Dialogue – Peeto and John's exchange ('Skinny little yanks like you..... Blokes like us') what Peeto says to Red Dog.



**Question: How does the Director set this scene up to completely challenge our ideas about how men 'should' behave?**

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### **Lord Nelson Scene (44.20 to 48.25)**

**Essential Question: What can be the consequences of belonging and not belonging?**

The scene opens in the pub with Jocko relating how Red Dog saved his life and then fades into Jocko in his bathers entering the water.



- **What technique does the Director use to show a flashback in time? (fade)**
- **How is the atmosphere of an Aussie BBQ created? (sound of bbq, conversations)**
- **What techniques does the Director use to create tension as Jocko moves further into the bay? (slow motion/music)**
- **How does the Director merge the foreshore with Red Dog and Jocko in the water? (Music/SFX/Cutting/Mid-shots)**

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## Where's John? (55.00 to 102ish)

**Essential question: How do we deal with loss?**



- How is music used to create an atmosphere in this sequence?
- Discuss the use of montage to show passing of days after John's funeral. Compare this to the montage of Red Dog on his journey to find John which holds a different tempo and focus.
- How have colours been used to create an atmosphere? Compare Vanno's visit during the day to Jocko's visit at night. Note the shadows.
- Discuss the use of narration/voice over and the emotion in Peeto's voice. How does this add to the atmosphere created?
- How do cuts to the present day pub add to the emotion in this sequence?
- How does the use of slow motion increase the intensity of Red Dog's search for his lost master?
- How does the Director tell this part of the story through Red Dog's eyes?



**Question: How does Red Dog deal with the loss of his master?**



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### The Cribbages (102 to 107.30)

Essential question: How does society value uniqueness?



- Discuss the characters of Mr and Mrs Cribbage. Why do we dislike them from the moment we meet them?

Nancy: Red Dog is not your average dog, Mr Cribbage. He has privileges! Everybody knows that!  
Mrs Cribbage: I don't care if he's the Queen's bloody corgi! If you don't get rid of him, we get rid of you.  
Mr Cribbage: Your contract clearly states that you cannot own a dog.  
Nancy: I don't own Red Dog. Nobody does.  
Mr Cribbage: Then he's a stray.  
Nancy: No he's common.  
Mrs Cribbage: (pff!) What the heck's common?  
Nancy: He's accepted and cared for by the town. The community.  
Mr Cribbage: Now there's a laugh. That's no proper town and there's no such community, it's just a bunch of dirty miners working, drinking and whoring. What happens in this park is what I say and I say that dog is a dangerous stray plain and simple and the next time I see him, I'll shoot him for sure.  
Nancy: Listen to me you little Bug. You as much as harm a hair on that dog's head and you will have me and the entire Pilbara to answer to.  
Mr Cribbage: You've been warned, Miss Gray and so are you. (mimes shooting Red Dog)



- Discuss use of the anthem 'We can't be beaten' to accompany the montage that plays after the Cribbage's threat to Red Dog and Nancy. What does this tell us about the community of Dampier and their regard for Red Dog?



**Question: The community of Dampier may well be made up of 'dirty, drunken miners' but how does it show Mr and Mrs Cribbage what is truly important?**

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Red Dog's last hour (111.00 – 120.40)

**Essential question: How do we deal with loss?**



Discuss the mise-en-scene of the pub:

- The sound effects
- Consider the song, 'Way Out West' reinforcing the idea of their tight-knit community
- Rejection of British forefathers –Dampier – as a celebration of what makes this “melting pot” have a sense of identity and belonging. Look closely at Jocko’s monologue.
- Meeting at the pub – central place.
- Red Dog is dying at the pub – significant location
- Group of people significant of “cross section of community”
- Jukebox - as soon as the punters hear this music they dance and sing to the lyrics – familiarity to song – reflect the plight of the miners ‘living and working on the land’.
- Represents the “Melting – Pot” within the community – mix of ethnicities, pilot, policeman, men, women of differing ages,
- Listen to lyrics of the song – reflects mood and experience



**Questions:**

- **Why has the Director chosen this location for the locals to gather during Red Dog’s hours?**
- **How does Jocko’s speech inspire the locals in the pub? What is its underlying message?**
- **How does the song played on the jukebox inspire the mood of the crowd at the pub?**

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Jocko's speech – 'There's an iron statue outside, brought up from Perth.... It's of that old English explorer, William Dampier... paid for as in all things by Hamersley Iron, to stand at the entrance of this town. Dampier sailed into the harbour in 16 something or other, spent 5 minutes and sailed out again.....The only thing he wrote about the place was, 'too many flies'...that's it! Too many flies! Well, I say to hell with that! Why should we have a statue honouring a poncy fly hating aristocrat....for that matter a fat bloody general or god help us a stinking politician... we should have somebody who understands this place, somebody that lives and breathes its vastness and desolation... Somebody that's got red dust stuck up their nose and in their eyes. And in their hair and up their ass! Somebody who is just like all of us. Men and women who understand the meaning of independence and the importance of a generous heart. Mates, who are loyal, by nature, not design. Who know the meaning of love and loss; somebody that represents our heart. Somebody that represents the Pilbara in all of us. And I say that somebody, damn it!!! Is a dog!!!

## **Sequence 2 - Dying scene at the Graveyard**

**Essential Question: How do we deal with loss?**



- Entire community assembled/emotional scene
- Stance of unity
- Note framing of shot-trees – dryness of landscape/lush green foliage
- Central –Vanno and his wife and child – cycle of life
- Jocko takes off shirt and covers over Red Dog who has recently deceased☹️ Next to John's grave
- Epitaph – "John Grant – Lover, Wanderer, who will live in our hearts forever."
- RD dies next to his master's grave – epitaph reflects spoken words in the pub. Hence, John and Red Dog were one.
- Red Cat returns
- Jocko covers RD out of respect
- Nancy kneels and says "You stay boy. You stay here. You're home now." – He is home next to his master.
- The last words that John says to RD before he leaves are, "Stay boy. You stay here."
- RD theme being played
- Look at last shot of this scene – one of peace and tranquillity



**Question: How do the final sequences show us that belonging does matter?**

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Year 7 English - Red Dog

## PPP – Powerpoint, prezi or poster!

**Character study:** The vignettes that the characters tell in the pub are central to our understanding of the Red Dog story. Whilst there are a number of minor characters in the story, our attention is drawn to the stories of these characters in particular:

- Vanno
- Peeto
- Jocko
- Nancy
- John
- Jack and Maureen

**In groups of three, create either a powerpoint, prezi or poster focussed on one of these characters.**

Your presentation must focus on the following:

- A description of your character and how they came to be in Dampier
- Describe your character - their attitudes, their habits, quirky details, things that they say etc.
- Re-tell the story of how Red Dog inspired, saved or helped your character
- How does your character belong within the community of Dampier?
- How does your character show that belonging matters?

**Due date:**

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