

Jason Chen and the Time Banana Teachers' Guide

Note for teachers

The activities in this guide are intended to be used selectively as suits the class and the time available. As with most lesson materials, it is a work in progress and any feedback would be welcome.

Before Reading

Discussion Points

1. This story uses the device of time travel. Do you think it is or could be possible to travel through time? Why? Why not?
2. If time travel becomes possible, how do you think people will use it?
3. How would you like to use it?
4. What problems might it cause or solve?
5. What time period would you like to visit and why?

Comprehension: While Reading

Read the first section, "On the run".

1. Who is telling the story?
2. What do we know about him?
3. Where is he?
4. Who else is in the story?
5. What problems does the storyteller face?
6. How do the other characters relate to the main character?
7. What questions does this chapter raise about what might happen in the rest of the story?

Chapter 1

1. Which new characters are introduced in this chapter?
2. What new information do we learn about Jason?
3. What questions from "On the run" have been answered?
4. What new questions have been raised?

Chapter 2

1. What evidence supports the idea that Mrs B is "weird"?
2. What clues does Jason expect to find that would show that Mrs B is a psycho?

3. What does he find?
4. Why does Mrs B hesitate at the end?
5. What do you think she might say?

Chapter 3

1. What is the relationship between Jason's parents like?
2. How does Jason feel he fits into Australian society?
3. What new signs of Mrs B's strangeness appear?
4. How does Jason adjust to the idea of the time machine?
5. How does the demonstration affect Jason?

Chapter 4

1. What does Jason learn about the old days?
2. What do we learn about Jason's appearance?
3. What item does he pick up in the bedroom?
4. What do we learn about Mrs B's appearance?
5. What is Mrs B's background?
6. What does Jason's note show about him?

Chapter 5

1. How does Mrs B's behaviour change once she is in the past?
2. How is Jason beginning to feel?

Chapter 6

1. What advice does Mrs B give Jason about how to speak?
2. How do Jason and Mrs B deal with their first test?

Chapter 7

1. How do Jason and Mrs B deal with their second test in Mr Collins?
2. What impact does the township have on Jason?
3. What do you think Mrs B meant when she said that the hard part of the job was done and only the "fun" part was left?
4. What doubts does Jason have about the adventure?

Chapter 8

1. What impact do the ferryman and the crossing have on Jason?
2. Why is the "Farrier's Arms" a shock to Jason?

Chapter 9

1. Given Jason's feelings, why doesn't he go home at this point?
2. Why do things become more urgent?
3. How does Jason compare the danger of the old days to his own time?

Chapter 10

1. What is distinctive about the way Shorty and Giraffe speak?
2. What do they suspect Jason of doing? Why?
3. How does Jason escape from them?

Chapter 11

1. How different is it to read about this event now, compared with at the beginning of the book?
2. Why do you think this event was used as the opening?
3. How do Ah Sing's men deal with the threat?
4. What is the atmosphere like in the town as Jason and Ah Sing go to meet Mrs B?

Chapter 12

1. How does Jason feel when Ah Sing and Mrs B discuss the situation?
2. What does he misunderstand about the time and society he is in?
3. How does Ah Sing resolve the problem of what to do?
4. What is Ah Sing's background?
5. What comparison does Ah Sing make with ancient Rome?

*Research topic: Find out about what happened at the gold fields at Lambing Flat.

Chapter 13

1. Compare Gan Som and Jason.
2. Who do Jason, Gan Som and Ah Sing meet near the drapery?
3. What does this encounter show about life in Brisbane? Could this happen today? Why/why not?
4. How does Ah Sing deal with the sergeant?

Chapter 14

1. Why is the girl in the lolly shop nervous?
2. Who do Jason, Gan Som and Ah Sing encounter outside?
3. What happens next?
4. What view does Jason get of a hidden world in Brisbane?
5. What puzzles Gan Som about Jason?
6. While Jason is watching the shop, what drama unfolds in front of him?
7. What dilemma does Jason face?
8. How does he resolve it?
9. How do Jason's actions change history?

10. What item does he use during the climax?
11. How has Mrs B changed, when Jason sees her again?
12. This is a long chapter. Why do you think all these events are grouped together?

Chapter 15

1. How do Jason and Gan Som surprise people?
2. What is the atmosphere like near the fire?
3. What part do Jason and Gan Som play?
4. Who do they meet?
5. How does Jason's relationship with this person change?
6. What is the role of the soldiers at the fire?
7. How is the fire beautiful?

Chapter 16

1. How does Jason feel when he is leaving?
2. What present does Mrs B give to Ah Sing?
3. How does this break her own rules?
4. What problems do Jason and Mrs B face at the river docks?
5. How does the sergeant play a role?
6. What does the sergeant offer Jason?
7. What goes wrong as Jason is returning to the docks?
8. What do you think was in the package that the sergeant gave Jason? Why do you think that?

Chapter 17

1. What is Gan Som's secret?
2. How does Jason feel as he and Mrs B approach the place where they left the metal platform?
3. How does Jason feel when he returns to his own time?
4. How long has he been away? How do we know?
5. What strange experience does he have at home?
6. How is his relationship with his parents different when he gets home?
7. How does Jason explain things to Brendan?
8. How does he reflect on his experiences?
9. What souvenir does Mrs B give him?
10. What was Jason's dad's response to his dream?
11. How do we know what is real?

*** Research: Find out more about indentured labourers in Australia. Were they only from China? Why was this allowed?**

When and how did it stop? What did people say about it at the time? How were the labourers treated?

Whole Story Tasks: After Reading

1. Choose a character and write down three qualities that we learn about them in each chapter where they are present.
2. Write a list of the machines Jason wants to invent and what they do.
3. Look at the use of the senses in the story. How do they help develop the atmosphere?
4. Look at the chapter endings. How do they help to carry readers on to the next part of the story?
5. Look at the conflicts between Jason and Mrs B. What do they show us about each character?
6. Look at the chapter titles. What clues do they give about the story? What tone do they set?
7. Trace Jason's journey on a map of old or new Brisbane and mark where key events occurred.
8. Philosophy circle: discuss the idea that Jason's dad raises at the end, regarding the uncertainty of our senses and understanding.
9. Who was the red-haired woman that Jason's dad was watching on TV? What effect did she have on Australia? What were her policies?
10. If Jason goes back to old Brisbane again, what do you think might happen?
11. Write and act out an inquiry into the fire, taking on the roles of police, witnesses, suspects, shop owners, firemen and the coroner or judge.
12. Choose a time that you would like to visit. Make a list of the things you would take with you and your reasons for choosing these things.

Vocabulary Development

Match the words from the story with their meanings, and then write a new sentence using each word.

words	meanings
interlocutor	person who studies the forces in the universe
drapery	forced into working to pay a debt
indentured	people from China
physicist	rough, violent
Celestials	person you are talking to
unruly	shop selling material
hamlet	pest animals
farrier	welcoming
vermin	village
hospitable	a maker of horse shoes

Creative Writing

A) Choose another period in the history of Brisbane (or your own town or suburb). What interesting events could a time traveller become involved in? Imagine the traveller was someone like you. Plan and write a short story about their adventures.

B) Mrs Bailey in *Jason* is a slightly eccentric character. Scientists in real life and fiction are often described as being eccentric. Try to invent your own scientist character with some unusual qualities. What could your character invent or develop? What would that lead to? Who else might become involved? Write a character profile of your scientist.

C) Imagine you are one of the "past people" who met Jason and Mrs Bailey. Write a page from their diary about meeting the two strangers. How might they describe them? What might they think about Jason and Mrs B?

D) Old Brisbane is a dark, smelly and sometimes dangerous place. Think of a place you know about or can research. Describe it by using the five senses and by giving some details about its atmosphere. What characters might be found there? What events might happen there?

E) Re-write a key event from the story using a different character's point of view. (For example, you might choose Mrs B or Ah Sing.)

F) What might Gan Som do next? Write about his day after Jason left old Brisbane.

The Mechanics of Time Travel

Stories have talked about many different methods of time travel, such as special doorways and gates, or machines with flashing lights.

What do you think a time machine might look like? Draw one and label it. Write a few instructions for how to use it.

How else might time travel happen (apart from by using machines or walking through special doorways)? Think about things you could

touch, eat, drink or breathe, that might allow you to travel through time.

Now imagine a character like yourself. How could this character come in contact with time travel? If they could choose a time, where would they go?

Plan a story on this.

Orientation _____

Complication 1 _____

Complication 2 _____

Complication 3 _____

Possible Resolution _____

The Past is another country

As Jason discovers, people dress, talk and think differently in old Brisbane. Research the time period you have chosen and write a profile of two characters from that time.

Read this example about the ferryman in *Jason Chen*.

Name: *Bartholomew Reginald Drump*

Age: *Between 35 and 40*

Family Background: *Seven siblings. Only one other survived*

Clothes: *Anything he can get cheaply*

Job: *Ferryman*

Favourite expressions: *"Och, I wane born yesterday"*

Favourite activities: *Drinking rum and swearing in Gaelic*

Favourite object: *His boat, The Lady Mary*

Pet hates: *Troopers, and passengers who try to cheat him*

Worst fear: *Being attacked by a whale*

Feelings about school: *He never went*

Health problems: *Rotting teeth*

Your characters:

Name: _____

Age: _____

Family Background: _____

Clothes: _____

Job: _____

Favourite expressions: _____

Favourite activities: _____

Favourite object: _____

Pet hates: _____

Worst fear: _____

Feelings about school: _____

Health problems: _____

Factual Writing

1. Write a report on the fire in a modern style. Use the reporter questions of who, what, where, when and why.
2. Write a crime report on the street fighting between Shorty and Giraffe's gang and Ah Sing's sons.
3. Make a recruitment poster for the troopers, featuring the Sergeant.
4. Make a comic poster advertising the ferry service in old Brisbane.
5. You have been appointed to review the fire-fighting system in Brisbane after the big fire. What would you recommend? Why? Remember, you only have the technology of the day e.g. steam, horse and man power plus materials like wood, steel, leather and rope.
6. Write an article for the local paper about Mrs Bailey and her giant banana. Remember, the reporter wouldn't know about the time machine inside.

Critical Literacy

1. a) What position does the author take on the actions of Shorty and Giraffe?
b) How is this shown in the story?
2. a) Are the anti-Chinese voices given equal time or value?
b) Do you think they should be?
3. a) Are there any perspectives that are missing from the story that could be reasonably included?
b) If so, how would they change the story?
4. What is Jason's position in relation to Anglo Australian and Vietnamese Australian cultures?
5. a) How might the story have been different if Jason had been born in Vietnam or China?
b) Or if he had been born in Europe?
c) Or if he was an Indigenous Australian?
6. a) At the time the story is set (1864) there were very few Chinese women in Australia. Research why this was so.

- b) How do you think this influenced the Chinese society in Australia?
- c) How might it have influenced the way European Australians saw the Chinese people?

7. How are adults and children shown in the story? Think about their actions in the story.