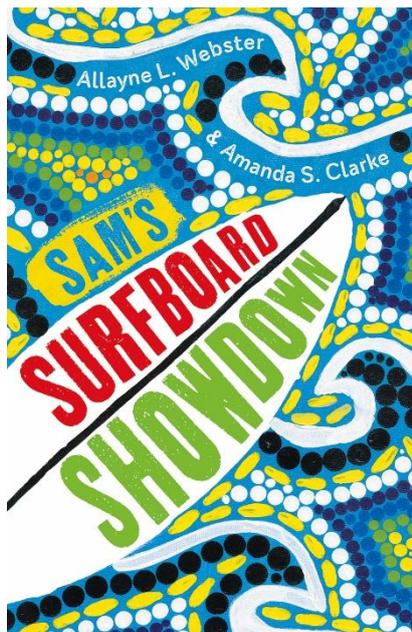


# SAM'S SURFBOARD SHOWDOWN



## Teachers' Notes

**Title:** Sam's Surfboard Showdown

**Author:** Allayne L Webster and Amanda S Clarke

**Publication Date:** February 2018

**Notes by:** Rae Carlyle

**ISBN:** 9781742991894

**RRP:** \$12.99

**Synopsis:** Sam is used to being good at things. He is the fastest runner, the best bowler, and the quickest swimmer in his class. With good friends at school, a supportive father at home, and a mother who makes the best baked goods in the district, Sam's life is just the way he likes it. But not everyone can always be the best at everything, and when a new kid starts at Sam's school, Sam suddenly finds himself struggling to cope with a bunch of new and unpleasant emotions...for Finn seems to be just that little bit better at everything than Sam is. He beats Sam's score on the maths test, kicks a ridiculous number of goals in football, bowls out half a dozen of the opposing team in cricket, and Sam suspects that to add insult to injury Finn might even be better looking than Sam is. But Sam is determined not to let Finn beat him at everything, and when a nipper's junior surf lifesaving competition is announced with the grand prize being nothing other than a surfboard signed by Australian surfing star Mick Fanning, Sam vows to train and practice until he can beat Finn and win the prize. Sam is no quitter, and over the six weeks before the competition he does his absolute best to fulfil his vow. Life, however, has a way of throwing up the unexpected, and Sam's burning urge to win at all costs is tempered as he realises that maybe, winning isn't the most important thing after all, or the only thing in which he should be taking pride. How Sam copes with the challenges he finds himself facing, and grows and learns along the way, makes for an enjoyable and entertaining story of family, friends, and finding out what really matters in life.

## About the Authors:

Step sisters, **Allayne L. Webster** and **Amanda S. Clarke**, grew up in Kingston SE, South Australia.

**Allayne** is the author of numerous children's and young adult novels and the recipient of three South Australian Arts grants. Her middle grade novel, *Paper Planes*, (Scholastic) was a 2016 CBC Notable Book.

**Amanda**, an Aboriginal artist, is a descendant of the Ngarrindjeri people, born in Kingston S.E. on Meintangk land, now residing in neighbouring Robe SA, on Boandik lands. This is her first publication, and the cover features her vibrant artwork.

## Themes

Key Themes: Family, winning and losing, friends, empathy and compassion for others, pride in heritage, connection to country, sporting competitions, self-sacrifice.

## Writing Style

Written in the first person from the point of view of Sam, the story is told using language appropriate to, and typical of, young people today. Sam shares his thoughts and feelings about himself, his family, and his friends with the reader, while simultaneously describing the events that are unfolding around him. The language used is modern and colloquial, and the vocabulary and syntax are representative of an Australian child of senior primary/junior secondary age. Webster and Clarke deftly manipulate sentence, paragraph, and chapter length, maintaining interest and plot-tension throughout, whilst ensuring the story is still accessible to a young readership.

## Illustration Style

Clarke's artwork on the front cover, and at the start of each chapter, is a vibrant fusion of a traditional indigenous dot-painting style with modern colours, materials, and subject matter. She depicts both natural and manufactured items using a bravely twenty-first century palette. Her cover design embodies the challenge of integrating traditional indigenous culture and ways with modern Australian society, that is faced by both the main character in the story, as well as by many indigenous youth of today.

## Study Notes, Discussion Points, and Activities

- 1) As a class discuss what you can predict about the book based on the title and cover. What is a showdown? what do you think the story might be about? What sorts of things do you think are likely to happen in the story?
- 2) After reading the story discuss your predictions - were they correct, or partially correct? Which parts were very different to your expectations and which parts were similar to your predictions? Why do you think this might be so?
- 3) Before reading chapter 10, discuss what you think will happen in the big race. What would you like the outcome to be? Why do you think your preferred outcome would make a good ending to the story? After reading chapter 10, discuss your reaction to the way the race ended. Do you think that this was a good way to end the story? Were you surprised at the ending, or did you expect something like this to happen?
- 4) As a class discuss the cover artwork of *Sam's Surfboard Showdown*. What is the style of the painting on the cover?
- 5) Look at examples of indigenous dot-paintings, either in books in the library or online. As a class discuss the different styles and types of paintings that you can identify, and talk about the sorts of things that they show.
- 6) Visit an art-gallery, local exhibition, or museum that has a display of indigenous artwork.
- 7) What is the symbolism of the artwork at the top of each chapter heading? What is the painting depicting? Create a wave or ocean symbol or motif of your own using watercolour or acrylic paints.

- 8) Some of the scenes in *Sam's Surfboard Showdown* are serious, but some are also funny. Why do you think that the authors included funny scenes in their story? What makes something funny in a book, and what is the effect of humour on the reader? Which is your favourite humorous moment in the novel? Write a short piece describing which part of the story you think is the funniest, what you like about it, and what makes it funny.
- 9) In *Sam's Surfboard Showdown*, the children in Nippers are all learning to swim well and to help save people who get into trouble when swimming. Why is it so important to learn to swim? Do you think that it is as important in other countries as it is in Australia? Why or why not?
- 10) Lots of people in Australia live near the beach like Sam, but there are also many people who don't live near the beach. It is important for all Australians that they be able to stay safe in the water. As a class brainstorm water safety rules that are relevant to the bodies of water that can be found in your local area. Think about whether you have beaches, rivers, dams, creeks, waterfalls, swamps, ponds, lakes, swimming pools, or waterparks nearby. Make a list of all the different safety rules that you come up with. Remember, if you have two or more types of open or deep water in your area (eg. a river and a public pool), you will need to think of all the differences between them when you are thinking of your safety rules. In pairs or small groups use the rules that you have come up with to make a water safety poster. Display your posters around the school.
- 11) When Sam first meets Finn, he is really upset by the fact that Finn keeps beating him at everything, and Sam no longer wins all the competitions. Sam's friends however, aren't nearly as upset by the way Finn seems to be the best at everything now. Why do you think this might be the case? How important is it in life to always win things? What is more important to Sam's friends, and to Sam at the end of the novel than always winning and being the best at things? Write a one page creative response to the novel, where you share your feelings about the importance of winning, of losing gracefully, and of being a good sport.
- 12) At the ice-cream shop, Katie asks Sam if he wants 'sour grape flavour'. What does she mean by this? If you have a copy of the original fable about sour grapes in the school library, read it as a class.
- 13) As a class discuss what makes a good sport? Think about how Finn behaved after the burping competition, and how Sam acts when Ziggy wins the surfboard.
- 14) When Sam finds out that Finn's life isn't as happy and perfect as Sam had imagined it was, how does Sam feel? As a class discuss what it feels like to find out that other people have problems we never knew about. Do you think it is ever possible to really know what someone else's life is like? Why/why not?
- 15) As a class discuss the descriptive language used in the story. On page 84 Sam says he is *sleek as a dolphin* and *fast as a swordfish*. Is this an example of metaphor or simile? Individually, write some ocean or water themed similes or metaphors of your own. Choose your favourite phrase from the ones you have created and illustrate it.
- 16) In the title of the novel, *Sam's Surfboard Showdown*, every word starts with the same sound. This is called alliteration for consonant sounds, and assonance for vowel sounds. Write a title of a novel that you would like to have written about yourself, where all the words in the title start with the same sound.
- 17) On page 29 Sam says that he *forgot all about Finn being the best at everything and I just had fun*. As a class discuss the importance of having fun as opposed to focusing on trying to be the best. Which do you think is the smarter attitude to have to life, and why?