

## STUDYING A DOCUMENTARY

### A documentary according to dictionary.com is:

A television show or film based on recreating an actual event, life story, era that purports to be factually accurate and contains no fictional content.

The documentary form has the concept of informing the audience of a 'real life' situation but you will note that the word 'purports' comes into the definition above. A documentary inherently has biases based on the beliefs of the producer/director even if they don't intentionally set out to project one particular point of view. Documentaries deal with facts and are based on real life situations. At the core of a documentary is the need to touch the audience and call them to action in so much as its purpose is to inspire inner or social change. A documentary might/should inspire change and this is where the different techniques involved in making a documentary come into play.

A documentary will have an initial script that has to be adaptable as when you film real life situations flexibility is the key to enabling the audience to experience what the subject(s) are experiencing. In the early stages of documentaries they were focused on being just informative. This has obviously changed over the past few decades. We expect the form to be entertaining yet the focus must still be on the subject.

There is no specific formal structure or formulae for composing a documentary and they are all structured very differently, often depending on the subject. For example if they are about one person the footage will be focused on that individual but if it is a

more amorphous subject such as climate change, the challenges are very different for the producers. Documentaries can call on a variety of people and techniques to make their case. These include;

- Experts such as professors, politicians, billionaires, depending on the subject
- Statistics
- Interviews
- On location shots
- Commentary i.e. voiceover
- Anecdotes, stories
- Graphs and charts
- Recounts and descriptions
- Dramatisations
- Use of colour, black and white, animation
- Montages
- Music, silences, sound
- Panel discussions with/without an audience

These are a few examples but you also need to consider the style of the documentary. For example older style classical documentaries are very rigidly chronological, factual and focused on dramatised realism. This has morphed into a more docu-drama style over the years and now audiences expect entertainment with their information. However, most documentaries still require extensive research so that the content is factual and verifiable. Even in documentaries such as *Go Back to Where You Came From* which is people based, to make a point the interactions have been researched, found and the content made accessible to the audience.

What the research does is ensure that the audience gets to see the heart of the issue, the part that is engaging, interesting and ultimately unique to that subject. A good documentary creates a 'hook' to capture your interest. It then establishes the core assertion of the subject, arouses curiosity in the audience and gives hope of some change with action or change of ideas. Much like a fiction text a documentary may also have a strong narrative, a protagonist, characters and a conclusion. You can use some of the ideas and knowledge, especially techniques, from your knowledge of fiction, just be alert to the subtle differences in the genres. In the documentary you can also have a backstory, points of view and some conflict which engenders emotions. It is the emotional engagement with the subject that creates empathy with the audience. We will examine how this is done by *Go Back to Where You Came From* later in this guide.

## IVAN O'MAHONEY

Ivan Mahoney is an Australian producer and director who has been involved in a number of programs including *Great Southern Land*, *The Boys from Baghdad*, *High Borderland* and *How to Plan a Revolution*. He has degrees in international law and journalism, and has been a litigation lawyer and a peacekeeper in Bosnia.

O'Mahoney has won numerous awards for his writing, direction and production with the majority of his work being about human rights issues. The series *Go Back to Where You Came From* won him awards from the AFI and even a Logie. He also won an Australian Directors' Gold Award for Best Documentary in a Documentary Series.

O'Mahoney has said the series is 'a kind of blend between reality TV and an observational documentary.' In an interview with Graeme Blundell in *The Australian* newspaper, he argues the neutrality of the series,

*"Even those of the six who didn't change their positions came to appreciate that the discussion is not as simple as they had always thought," O'Mahoney says. "I don't want viewers to think that we want to manipulate them into being extremely welcoming of asylum-seekers or that we have a position that they are all bad and unwelcome."*

As he suggests, if the one thing the series achieves is to make people realise there is a more complex discussion to be had, it will have done its job. But it won't be easy.'

[HTTP://WWW.THEAUSTRALIAN.COM.AU/ARTS/REALITY-SHOW-PARTICIPANTS-WALK-A-MILE-IN-THE-SHOES-OF-ASYLUM-SEEKERS/STORY-E6FRG8N6-1226076364978](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/reality-show-participants-walk-a-mile-in-the-shoes-of-asylum-seekers/story-e6frg8n6-1226076364978)

## PLOT SUMMARY

### Episode One

We begin our journey introducing the topic and the six Australians chosen for their 'strong views' on refugees. They are:

- Raye (63) a retired social worker who lives in the Adelaide Hills near a detention centre.
- Roderick (29) a liberal political aspirant from Brisbane who doesn't want to appear a 'leftie'.
- Raquel (21) who is unemployed and lives in Sydney's west. She is a self-admitted racist who left school at 14.
- Darren (42) a businessman from Adelaide. He is married to a Taiwanese wife with two children.
- Gleny (39) a musician and teacher from Newcastle who thinks we can take more refugees.
- Adam (26) a Cronulla lifeguard who was raised in the Shire and thinks refugees are 'criminals'.

All this is supervised by Dr David Corlett a Melbourne academic and refugee expert who speaks in stilted tones and gives 'facts' about refugees. The six Aussies are to live the life of the refugee for a month and see the reality behind the concept of what a refugee goes through. They are initially brought together at the former Defence Fortress in Sydney and then taken to their first experiences. It is a 'social experiment' which begins by them being stripped of their identities. We see their apprehension, especially as a few of them are not experienced travellers or worldly.

Throughout the episodes we learn more about each of the characters and their views. As each character develops a television persona, we need to remember that there is bias in the original concept and in what sections are edited for the show. The show is designed to create empathy for the refugees as well as develop sympathy from the audience.

Raye, Raquel and Roderick are sent to Albury to live with an African family while the other three go to Liverpool to live with a group of Iraqi men. It is a journey in reverse for them as they begin by living with these families and learning their stories. In Liverpool we learn about the Iraqi war and how the men had to escape oppression. Think about why the man who interpreted for the Americans wanted his face scrambled on camera. The reality is different from the expected as we learn why the men had to surrender their documents. We learn of their life back home where death is a reality. On a trip to the local pool we learn of the different opinions between Gleny and Darren. At the pool we learn one of the Iraqi men is scared of water and think how hard the boat trip must have been. The man has post-traumatic stress disorder. The shock of what happens to these people is reinforced by a visit to Villawood Detention Centre.

Some of the stories from the detainees have shocked the group who have a series of 'reality checks' through this experience. The final day of the visit has assured the three visitors that each of the refugees is a real person and that some are unconvinced the boat method is best.

In Albury the others go to live with the Masudi family, African refugees who have begun to forge a new life after fleeing Burundi and The Congo. The couple met in Kenya where they had fled from

their respective countries. Even in the refugee camp they were robbed of food by locals, the conditions were poor and they were in poor health, as they had no money. Maisara even wanted to suicide when she lost her baby. We learn later that her sisters were raped and one got AIDS. Also we learn many relatives were still there or dead. Her story deeply affects the two women but Raquel still, at the end of the visit, thinks the family is nice but still doesn't like all Africans. Bahati also tells of his incarceration and torture because of his political beliefs in Burundi. Maisara wants to be reunited with her family who have been in a refugee camp in Kenya for four years.

After this visit the group are all reunited in Darwin for an experience on a boat. They leave from Darwin and experience a journey on a makeshift boat with flooding in the bilge and then smoke. It is, of course, a set-up by the television producer but it is a real experience for them and it does create conflict and tension. We learn that the boat makes it a hard journey. Only two percent of refugees come by boat. It is cramped and uncomfortable, especially for Raquel who becomes sea sick. A boat such as this normally carries fifty people so we see how this might cause problems.

Eventually the Coast Guard comes along and they are 'rescued' where they learn the truth about their predicament and recount the emotions they felt. Darren feels it's 'irresponsible' to put your family on a boat. He argues that they are being forced to feel 'empathy' by the media and he doesn't want to be filmed anymore. In the next episode they are told they are heading to a new destination overseas. We learn they are to go to Malaysia.

### Questions for Episode One.

1. Outline each character and their view on refugees. At this early stage which individual do you like best and why?
2. Think about your views on refugees prior to watching this episode. Have they changed? Why/ why not?
3. What do we discover about life in Iraq?
4. What do we discover about life in Africa, especially in Burundi or Angola?
5. Show how the experiences the participants have in these initial days change their views? Explain fully with reference to the text.
6. Summarise what happens on the boat trip.
7. Why do you think the producers staged this experience?
8. Discuss ONE discovery made by one of the participants and use a quote to support your ideas.
9. What bias can you detect from the makers of the documentary? Are they too supportive of the refugee experience? Do they offer any alternate views?
10. Which participant makes the most interesting television and why? What have you discovered about them? Have you discovered anything yourself from this first episode?

## Episode Two

This episode begins by recapping on the six people who are part of the experiment as well as reviewing their views and what happened to them in the previous episode. Then we get a précis of what is going to happen this week. We begin on a plane heading to Malaysia and learn Rod and Raquel have never travelled before but Raquel is determined to dress how she wants to despite it being a Muslim country. They travel through Kuala Lumpur and begin to assess the country. Malaysia is a 'staging post' where refugees live in 'limbo,' where they are illegal and have few protections against arrest and detention. They are then told they are to live with a group of Burmese Chin, a persecuted minority.

The leader of the Chin group is Kennedy who explains they fled from murder, rape and forced labour. Fifty people live in the flat but can't leave because of fear of arrest. It is crowded and lacks basic facilities including sanitation. Basic services are denied to them and the Australians are shocked at how they live and say it's 'primitive' but are impressed by the spirit of the children and how they adapt to their poor circumstances. Gleny thinks it is like a self-created 'detention centre'. Raquel complains about the conditions and children who are noisy into the night.

The next morning they are awakened by the street noise and call to prayer before the men head off to work with their hosts. They are working illegally for food by clearing land. They do not get paid for the work but prefer this to construction where the chance of arrest is very high. The women attend a makeshift school with the children where over one hundred children are taught in four rooms. They are short of teachers so they have to teach English. They attempt this and Gleny is very successful as she is a more experienced teacher. It is depressing to think that these children

will never have access to higher education. The men struggle with the work and Adam realises how easy life is in Australia. The experience has shown them how hard life is for the children especially and Rae becomes quite attached.

On completion of this visit, after a week, they are going on a border patrol and raid. On the helicopter they see the staging points where the illegals hide in the mangroves. The officials say it is hard to catch the people smugglers, so there has been no successful prosecution of people smugglers. That night the six travel on a raid to a construction site and watch how the illegals are caught and detained. They all have different views on this but the raid and its build-up make for good television rather than making any real point or impact. Over one hundred immigration officers, 'some armed', go on the raid. Illegals can be arrested, caned, detained and deported so it is quite dramatic for them and we see them try to escape and looked stunned when caught.

At the site men, women and children, including babies, are gathered up by the officers and taken away. The conditions they are living in are cramped and unhygienic. During the raid we see exactly what they have to live in. Raquel thinks it's 'exciting' and 'good' that they are arrested. Raye thinks it's 'sad' and states they, in her opinion, 'are not criminal'. The raid is 'full on' according to Darren. Listen for the music which makes it more dramatic. Also think about the use of close ups, baby shots and mood music to engender sympathy for their plight. During the raid over one hundred people are caught and trucked away.

The six Australians review the raid and Gleny is 'deeply affected' while Raye wanted to 'stop it' but Raquel disagrees. Darren still wouldn't put his family on a boat in the same circumstances but

Adam would. After this they are told they are heading to places many refugees go. Adam, Darren and Gleny are going to Jordan while the others are heading to Kenya and the refugee camps. Jordan is where Iraqi refugees flee to while in Kenya it is one of the biggest refugee camps in Africa. To get there they need an escort as the countryside is so dangerous. The driver says its 'not like the Ivory Coast'. They are taken to a collection point for new refugees in the camp and are processed as if they are real refugees. They are in Kakuma camp ('nowhere') where eighty-four thousand refugees live.

They are placed in a communal hut where they must stay for a few days until they are permanently housed. The Australians' 'comfort zone' has been well and truly broken as they encounter the camp conditions. Raquel is very stressed because of the poor conditions and food. Raye and Raquel go to the toilets together but they are pits so Raquel refuses to go and is in tears. We end with a few scenes from the next episode and shots of Jordan and Iraq, Kenya and the Congo.

## Questions for Episode Two

1. What is their initial impression of Malaysia?
2. Describe the conditions the Chin live in. What made them leave Burma?
3. What are the penalties for illegals in Malaysia?
4. Describe how we see hope in the Chin people.
5. How does Australia support the Malaysian government in the fight against illegals? How effective is this assistance?
6. Describe the build-up to the raid.
7. Analyse the differing views of the raid. What did each of the six Australians discover if anything?
8. How did you, as a viewer feel about the raid on the construction site?
9. Discuss how the camp in Kenya is framed by the producer to create impact with the audience.
10. How do conditions in the camp impact on the three Australians?

### Episode Three

We get the same recap of participants and events that occurred previously but also a preview of the night's viewing with quick shots and voice-over to make it more dramatic. In Africa, they queue for food in a line of about ten thousand and are 'intimidated' by all the black faces. After an hour and a half they get a paltry amount of food for the next two weeks. The three Aussies are moved because of 'safety concerns' as the place is quite violent. They are to be moved to the more permanent camp.

Over in Oman, Jordan they join half a million refugees from the Iraqi war and firstly they visit a Doctors Without Borders hospital to see bomb victims and discover what they can about the situation. They are invited to a social day where they see the patients alleviate some of the distress they are suffering. The scene then cuts back to Kenya where the three Aussies find the relatives of the Masudi family they lived with back in Albury. The twenty-five square kilometre camp is home to Bahati's brother and Maisara's sister. They are welcomed in their home where they show a video message from Australia and bring news from the family which pleases them.

It is an emotional meeting because of its bittersweet nature. One part of the family is safe while the other lives in the camp. Bahati's brother, Deo, was tortured and his first family disappeared. He admits life here is a struggle. They have no future, especially the children, as their possibilities are limited. It is hard because they feel they are not seen with the 'heart'. The scene then changes to Jordan where the three meet Wasmi's mother. She is being cared for by Rashid, Wasmi's brother who has come from America. The grandmother explains why he had to leave her behind as it

was unsafe. She is sick and wants to come to Australia but her paperwork has been in limbo for over a year.

Back in Kakuma the Australians take part in everyday life. We learn that Raquel has made a 'big shift' in what she thinks about the refugee situation. She has realised that she is 'spoilt' back in Australia. In Jordan, Rashid skypes his family back in America and it is a happy moment. They share food and depart the small rooms she lives in. After twenty days in the 'experiment,' Adam recognises they have 'nothing' with no permanent solution in Jordan and can understand why they get on a boat. Darren says he has certainly been affected. Then they are told they can choose to go to Iraq to see where they came from. They will be under the protection of the U.S. army in Baghdad. Back in Kenya they are invited to go to the Congo where they will be under UN protection. Raquel chooses not to go. Her farewell shows her change and newfound view of 'black' people.

Raye says her ideas have changed and she has a 'broader' picture of what being a refugee is. She now thinks she would 'do anything' to give her family a better life and would get on a boat to take a 'risk' for 'freedom'. The scene then changes to Kuwait where Darren, Adam and Gleny are geared up for the flight to Baghdad in a U.S Army Hercules. In Baghdad, they stay in U.S Army headquarters in Saddam's old palace where they spend the night.

In Goma, Congo, they realise that security is big business and the war there is the biggest since World War Two. The Congo has seventy million people. We learn rape is a weapon of war and over a thousand women a day are raped. The makeshift camps on the edge of the city get food for fifteen days of the month and it is a struggle. The women collect firewood in the hills to make money

but they risk being raped. To avoid this risk they make soap to in a primitive machine to supplement their income. The Aussies donate money to help fix the machine which had broken. They have a celebration where they sing 'There'll be no more rape' as the machine will be fixed. Rod thinks whoever can solve the conflict issue will win a Nobel Peace Prize as it's so complicated.

In Baghdad, Gleny, Adam and Darren head out in an armoured car into the streets of Baghdad where they get a taste of the violence and tension in the streets. At one point the traffic stops and makes everyone nervous as the convoy is 'vulnerable'. At the end of the journey they get a security briefing from a two star general who says the violence is decreasing in the country. It is down from 145 attacks a day to 15 attacks a day which are still mainly due to militia and Al Qaeda. The general says the question of personal safety is up to the individual. Darren thinks it is still resettlement rather than the illegal options. Adam says his own life is easy and now doesn't see them as 'illegal'.

After four weeks, the 'experiment is over'. Dr Corlette and the three others are debriefed. Darren even admits he has shifted into a more 'compassionate' view of refugees but still doesn't have sympathy for boat people. Gleny thinks 'jumping on a boat' would be her choice. Most agree the problem lies in their original countries but Raquel thinks she can no longer say 'no' to allowing them in. Adam thinks they 'scraped the surface' but it changed him. The refugee issue is 'complex' and their experiences shed some light on the 'humanity' of these people.

### Questions for Episode Three

1. What might the 'safety concerns' be in the Kenyan camp?
2. What are our first impressions of life in Jordan? Describe the hospital and the condition of the refugees who are being treated.
3. Why is the visit to Deo's home in the permanent camp in Kenya 'bittersweet'?
4. How does this visit show the dichotomy between those who are lucky and those who are trapped in limbo?
5. Discuss how Raquel's views have changed significantly. Give specific quotes and examples from the text. Have her values changes and have her discoveries been transformative?
6. Why might Rashid be upset during and after his translating duties with his mother?
7. Analyse what each of the participants learn from their trips to Baghdad and the Congo. Why do you think Raquel refuses to participate in the Congo trip?
8. Discuss in detail one discovery you have made from this episode.
9. Why is there a debrief at the conclusion of the four week experiment? Refer to
10. Analyse the full impact of the four week experiment on TWO of the six Australians.



## Episode 4 The Response

This episode offers no new footage of the journeys each of the participants undertook and, in my opinion, no new insights into each of them that we hadn't gleaned from the first three episodes. It begins trying to create a sense of drama by recapping and having a commentator, Anton Enis. Enis talks about how dangerous and controversial the whole thing has been. He calls the show a 'phenomenon' and then says the six Australians are 'brave' before introducing each in turn. The audience is mainly made up of friends and family of the participants plus those that took part as well as a few invited people who commented on-line.

Gleny makes an excellent point when she initially comments,

*'I was surprised by some of the elements that were left out'*

This goes to reveal the bias that is often a part of documentary making. Darren was also not happy about the way he was portrayed. Here we need to consider the bias of the producers and what they are trying to portray. How realistic is it to edit people's responses over four weeks to very emotional issues into three hours and then expect it to be a fair portrayal? It is important to remember that the producers are making television - thus creating a bias which I will talk about in further in the section on techniques.

Viewers see a long series of clips of Darren who says he was more affected by what happened to them, than it appeared. Adam says the raid was very upsetting and thinks it would have been worse had the cameras not been there. Darren's wife says the show did not portray him fairly and he is 'kind' which is supported by his work with the Burmese Chin community after his return. Darren is questioned by an African refugee yet he still argues he would

not get in a boat. Wasmi, the Iraqi refugee, says he was forced onto a boat because it is so violent at home. It is only safe in the green zone.

Darren doesn't think anywhere is 'relatively safe' for a refugee. They comment that his journey changed his views and now he is far more sympathetic to their cause. He thinks Jordan is 'shithouse' as a first refuge. His parents were worried about him as they lost all contact. Adam says Villawood Detention Centre was the catalyst that 'shook me up'. They gloss over the violence of the riots there by making it personal with Adam's brother who attended the riots to extinguish the fires. Our moderator then says the controversy created by the show was 'inescapable' and most of it surrounded Raquel.

Raquel 'bore the brunt' of the criticism after the first two episodes but it turned around during the third. Raquel says she 'learnt a lot' from her experience but again we are left to wonder what experiences she had that were omitted which weren't controversial. She is now more 'open minded' and she admits some of the comments made her 'upset'. Levi, her partner, says that she has told him stories that they omitted and that she is 'kind hearted'. They then show clips revealing her change of attitude in the final episode. They show comments from online people that show sympathy for Raquel who stopped looking at the comments anyway. Levi says Raquel didn't want to travel before the show and now she is more open and 'grown-up'. To complete the sequence there is an invite from a Muslim woman to visit and become friends.

Gleny then says the hurtful comments raged at Raquel needed to be modified by tolerance. She knew Raquel was changed

because they had talked in Dubai. Gleny's journey was exciting for her and the show proves we need to be 'more open'. We then shift our attention to Raye who also underwent a transformative shift in attitude. She began with controversial comments about 'shooting' refugees and wasn't upset by the drownings at Christmas Island, commenting heartlessly, 'serves the bastards right'. She makes a dramatic change through the course of the month and has befriended the Masudi family. She has been deeply moved by the experience and she feels it is wrong coming home and leaving people behind with 'nothing'.

Raye's husband Peter said she needed to go on the journey because she was involved with the situation because of the detention centre across from her home. We learn that from the camp only 900 out of 84000 people were resettled and Raye thinks this is poor. Roderick says he developed a deeper understanding of the issue and tells how some of the stories he heard were horrific. He found it hard to process a lot of the information. He gets a question about his T-shirts and his Liberal Party affiliations which he handles with aplomb and gets a rousing round of applause.

We also finally get a rundown of what happened to some of the people they met and which people touched them the most. We learn Maisara's sister has won a visa to America while Deo waits in the Kenyan camp for his visa. The Iraqi men have had no success and the families of the men are waiting for some response to their applications for visas. Dr Corlett says the programme was valuable because it opened debate.

### Questions for Episode 4 - The Response

1. What is the purpose of this fourth episode?
2. Why is the introduction designed to be dramatic and increase the tension?
3. Why does Darren feel his portrayal was not accurate? Do you agree with him?
4. How does Adam now feel about the refugee problem after his experience? What did he discover on the journey?
5. Raquel's change was the most profound. Discuss this change and what effect it has had on her life.
6. The producers may have edited Raquel's story to make it more dramatic and profound. Think about what Levi says about her story. What are your thoughts?
7. Gleny changes the least. What discoveries does she make on the way?
8. Raye also has a profound change according to her husband. Why did she go on the journey initially? What event allows her to discover how she really feels?
9. What specific discovery does Rod comment on?
10. Was this episode useful to your understanding of the issue? Do you think the producers were adopting a ruthless opportunism towards the the controversy? Did you discover anything new from this episode?

## CHARACTER ANALYSIS

- Gleny Rae
- Raye Colbey
- Raquel Moore
- Darren Hassan
- Adam Hartup
- Roderick Schneider

### Gleny Rae, singer from Newcastle NSW

*'I think we have the capacity to take more refugees.'*

Gleny is the participant who makes the fewest personal discoveries because she begins at a point of sympathy with the plight of the refugees. She is portrayed as the voice of reason and common-sense by the director and because of this is probably the least interesting participant as there is no conflict and little self-growth surrounding her. We see throughout her empathic and sympathetic reaction to both the refugees/asylum seekers and to the other participants. One example of this is the way she responds to Raquel at Kuala Lumpur airport. When Gleny suggests Raquel wear something more appropriate Raquel rebukes her and she accepts it graciously. Another example is from the beginning of the series when we see her saying that she would love to have a refugee stay in her own home. She is very sympathetic to the refugees and is shocked by their conditions. She says of the Burmese Chin,

*'it's almost like a detention centre they've created themselves for their own safety.'*

When all the conflict occurs on the 'leaky boat' journey she is nearly invisible on camera which reinforces her portrayal as a sensitive

person, which she may well be. Gleny is more than the cipher that she is portrayed as by the creators. She is a vibrant personality, a musician, teacher and chook owner who lives a happy lifestyle in her Queensland home. Nor does she lack intelligence and she notes in the final studio episode how much the director, editors have left out. She also has skills as we see when she teaches the children at the school in Kuala Lumpur and her joy in doing this.

Gleny is there in the series but as she already has empathy she doesn't make great television. Unlike the others who have complete turnabouts in their views, she doesn't make outrageous statements. She is the voice of reason, and reason doesn't make tense, conflicting television. Gleny learns and evolves as each little discovery she makes about the refugees and their world deepens her beliefs. She says she was 'deeply affected' by her discoveries and this is clear when we see her responses.

### Raye Colbey, retired social worker from Inverbrackie South Australia

*'When the boat crashed coming into Christmas Island I thought, 'it served you bastards right''*

Raye makes a real change in her opinions which have been coloured by the wonderful treatment the boat people receive in the detention centre across the road from her home in the Adelaide Hills. She says of them in the beginning,

*'I could go over there right now with a gun and shoot the lot of them. I don't care how hard it is where they come from, I don't think they have the right to come here and demand – demand – all this freedom.'*

Raye is so involved with the issue her husband tells us in the final episode that she was damaging her health and needed a new perspective. Her initial reaction to the refugee issue is strong and very outspoken. Raye is quite articulate and coherent in her thoughts but she has a great change in her views after staying in Albury with the Masudis. She relates to Maisara and identifies with her miscarried baby story. From this moment Raye's opinions begin to mellow significantly and we learn in the final episode that she is having the son stay with them. Raye says,

*'They are real refugees. They came the right way.'*

Raye also develops attachments to the Chin Burmese children, especially a couple of girls. We also see her deep attachment to Bahati's brother, Deo, his wife Yanni and Maisara's sister, Amenata in Kakuma. Here she becomes quite emotional as they leave, wondering why they are stuck in such a place and cannot find a place to live. Certainly Raye discovers a newfound empathy with the plight of the refugee and has also discovered something about herself – a certain peace of mind and she certainly is more calm and relaxed in Episode Four.

### **Raquel Moore, Unemployed from Western Sydney**

*'If it was up to me, I'd send them back. They wouldn't be staying here.'*

Raquel creates the best television with her outspoken views. One example might be,

*'I don't like Africans. You go to Blacktown...and now it really is Blacktown.'*

Raquel has very firm views against refugees, especially boat-people and has trouble adjusting to life as one. She notices the 'unhygienic odour' of the places she visits and keeps stating that she is 'Australian' and thus not from there. Raquel makes for great television because the director does not edit her provocative views which demonise her for many left leaning viewers. We learn in the last episode that she caused the most controversy in the tweets and comments the show generated, yet it is Raquel who makes the most discoveries of all of the participants.

It is her transformation from unemployed, bogan, Westie to refugee sympathiser that was the best received part of the episodes. From racist to an individual who says she has a 'heart' and recognises she is 'really badly spoilt' Raquel transforms from her experience totally and fully. She achieves the outcome that the director wanted from the show; Raquel is the change that many would want in the community. Raquel discovers much on her journey and this is especially so in relation to herself. These discoveries come through travel and expanding out of her comfort zone. Her stay with the African family in Albury begins her transformation and we see her eat the food despite her reservations. Here she also discovers their humanity and some of hers.

In Kuala Lumpur she is again confronted by a vastly different culture to the western suburbs of Sydney and finds the conditions unhygienic. Despite this she begins to find connections with people, although on the raid we see her still opinionated in her statements on illegals. One can see her logic but in the face of the human aspect it is hard to maintain this and she eventually begins to change fully in Kakuma where conditions are even worse and people are condemned to live in limbo. It is here she finds her

heart and this makes her, what I would call a conversion story, on camera. Discoveries can lead to 'new understandings' and can be 'far reaching and transformative.' They can be 'emotionally and intellectually meaningful' and can also be 'confronting and provocative'. There is much in your rubric on Discovery which applies to Raquel and her situation.

In the final episode she is questioned fully and is praised for her change. A Muslim woman aims to befriend her and learn about her religion. Generally she is heartily praised for her turnaround and the public comments have changed from abuse to considerable approbation. Raquel's journey of discovery leads to changes in her own behaviour and attitude. She discovers empathy and tolerance and her own place in the world. Her participation opens up a whole new world for her and her partner, Levi. Much has been discovered in a personal and social sense.

### **Darren Hassan, businessman from Adelaide**

*'People who come here without any documentation by boat should be immediately expatriated.'*

Darren comes into the series with some strong views on refugees yet he can never be accused of being racist. He sees things in black and white being an ex-soldier with a clear idea of how he views Australia and its sovereign rights. He cannot entertain the idea that people would leave their families and risk their lives to escape from a safe haven,

'Once they leave Malaysia, and then Indonesia, they become economic migrants. We need to send a tougher signal. People who are destroying documents, what are they trying to hide?'

Darren doesn't change this view and has strong reasons, for him, to maintain the view. It is also Darren who comments that the participants are being emotionally manipulated into 'forced empathy' with the migrants. He still considers them economic refugees when they leave a safe haven. He basically has to prove he has sympathy for the plight of the refugees and, in a rooftop interview in Jordan, he emphasises to the audience,

*'I am emotionally affected.'*

Darren maintains his ideas and philosophy throughout the episodes and only apologises once for his actions during the raid in Malaysia, blaming his army training for kicking in. In the final episode we learn, from his wife, how since returning he has made contact with the Burmese Chin community and offered assistance. This is a more positive and practical effort than all of the others combined. Darren recognises that the debate has many grey areas and doesn't shift from what he considers to be a sound position. He can't at any point see that these 'boat people' need to take the risk when they are safe.

So this leaves the question, what does Darren discover? He discovers the human, personal side of the refugee equation and this develops his ideas. He has discovered empathy with their situation, especially the Chin's, whom he is assisting. Darren also discovers and enunciates that he is being manipulated and alerts viewers to this.

### **Adam Hartup, Cronulla lifeguard**

*'Instead of harbouring them, we should just put them straight on a plane and send them back.'*

Adam changes his position significantly over the course of the episodes and while he begins with statements such as;

*'Why didn't the boat people stay in Malaysia or Indonesia where they were in no danger?'*

He develops an empathy and sympathy with the plight of the refugee, later saying things such as, 'these guys have nothing' and

*'I just hope every one of these guys get resettled very, very shortly.'*

Adam becomes very involved with the plight of each of the groups he stays with and also sees the simmering violence in the Villawood Detention Centre. His visit there was a 'wake-up call' but his biggest responses are to the Chin and the hospital visit in Jordan. Adam discovers these refugees are in 'no-man's-land and have little hope and nothing economically. He is shocked the Chin work for food and shelter only and can't even contemplate what would happen if the Chin were the victims of the raid in Malaysia.

Adam changes his views from being anti-boat to an individual who states he would;

*'Do the journey. Get on the boat. I...I wouldn't live in this. If I had to spend 3, 6, 12 months in a detention centre...well, if there's a glimmer of hope that I'd be getting out of this hole, well of course I would.'*

Adam's journey of discovery shows significant change and adaptation to new information. The quintessential 'Aussie bloke' who has been quite sheltered in the 'Shire' is opened up to a new vision of the world and what the situation is for these people. He discovers much about himself as he evolves his views and thinks about equity. Adam is a likeable, knockabout bloke and his discoveries surprise his family.

### **Roderick Schneider, financial planner from Brisbane**

*'I'm a government-hating, freedom-loving, centre-right winger.'*

Roderick 'Rod' Schneider is a member of the Liberal Party and running for office in that organisation. He is a well-balanced individual with strong views and doesn't want to come across as a 'leftie'. No problem with that considering his wardrobe which consists mainly of T-shirts with wonderful right wing slogans and graphics. He states categorically he didn't choose them specifically for the show it's just his wardrobe.

With his political affiliations one might have expected him to be completely anti-refugee but his views are clear and well-balanced throughout. He is not rabidly right wing but has firm beliefs about the world and how it should be politically. Yet he is empathic to the plight of the people he encounters and states,

*'We're all refugees.'*

and when they go on the raid in Malaysia to the building site he says;

*'I hope they're bad, bad people.'*

because if they aren't it would be cruel to arrest them. Roderick is a realist and he is clear about his own self-image. He admits that he is 'soft' in the Western world sense as he is a 'desk jockey' and the worst thing that could happen to him at work is a 'paper cut'. Note how he continues to work in this episode despite the blisters. The other factor that we need to consider when discussing Roderick is that he has never travelled before so any new place is a discovery for him.

Considering some of the places they are taken to Roderick adapts well and takes a considered position. For example, in Kakuma when Raye is saying the people need more food, he realistically points out that it would be nice in a perfect world but who is going to pay for it and recognises;

*'You're not going to be pleased but that's the situation.'*

Roderick discovers much over the course of the four episodes and comes across as a thoughtful, balanced person who uses his discoveries to adapt his views and his perspective on the world without sacrificing his core beliefs.

## CHARACTER QUESTIONS

For each character create a table that answers the following questions about discoveries in the text. This will clarify your ideas. In the next column give an example and in the next a specific quote. Help for these answers are also included in the themes section which follows.

Question	Example	Quote
What does the character discover about themselves?		
What does the character discover on their travels?		
What does the character discover about ONE specific group of refugees/ asylum seekers		
State TWO changes that occur in this character due to one or more discoveries through the series.		

## THEMES

- Discovery
- Journeys
- Freedom

### Discovery

*'The big problem for this world is...to educate the system to touch - to touch heart. If I touch your heart, immediately you are able to understand me.'*

DEO MASUDI – KAKUMA REFUGEE

There are many discoveries made throughout the four episodes of *Go Back to Where You Came From*. We will begin our analysis with what the six participants discover about themselves. The quote above from Deo Masudi is central to this as each of the participants has their heart touched in some way. Each learns something about themselves, even if it is just an empathy with people that they didn't understand. The situations they find themselves in are life-changing and they discover much about themselves including how resilient they are. One example is when Darren admits he is touched by what he has seen and Raquel finds that she is 'spoilt'.

While some of the six don't discover as much about themselves as others each one grows and changes in some way and evolves and develops their views and perceptions of the issue. Raquel turns around from being racist and disliking black people to having a clear understanding of the hardships of the Masudi's and also the Chin. Each participant has to deal with things way beyond their

comfort zone from physical hardship, lack of sleep to strange foods and long distance travel. The discoveries they make are evident in the fourth episode when they debrief in front of an audience.

Here it is interesting to hear how their families saw the change in each participant. Darren's wife tells of his empathy and how he rarely shows emotion – something that was an issue during filming. Raye's husband tells of her changed health and mental condition once she discovered the real issues rather than rant at the detention centre across the road. Levi, Raquel's partner, tells of her big heart which finally changed her views and her discovery of travel. Adam's parents also talk of how his discoveries changed him and widened his views on the world.

Each of the participants discovered something about refugees they didn't know prior to their experience. While Gleny was sympathetic, she learnt the terrible conditions in which they live and this reinforced her ideas. This raises the issue of the discoveries about place by each of the individuals participating in the experiment. The geographical distances they encountered on their journey certainly affected them. Look at the leaky boat sequence in the first episode when they are faced with the eternity of the sea and an unknown destination. It is interesting for the audience that the participants are not allowed to discover where they are going until specific moments in the episode to increase tension. This is the impact and power of a discovery about the unknown.

Another unknown is what they will face when they arrive. The initial destinations are still in Australia and only the circumstances are uncomfortable. Things are outside their comfort zones but



not too far so that it does give them an opportunity to adapt to different conditions. We see some struggle to adapt. For example, Raquel with her 'hygiene' issues and the shocked expression of all three women when they are told that 'fifty' women live in the room when they stay with the Burmese Chin in Kuala Lumpur. As the series progresses the geographical stresses on the six become more extreme and they discover inner strength although Raquel doesn't venture to the Congo, discovering her limitations.

When we discuss the geographical/ location issues that the participants undergo, it certainly is worth analysing the issues facing the refugees similarly. They have been displaced geographically and, unlike the participants, don't know they will be going home. They too discover new places and cultures and have little or no economic assistance until they arrive in a country such as Australia. Their resilience is also sorely tested but many have just discovered the happiness of a safe place. Think about the stresses on them, many with families, in unfamiliar environments. Also consider the fact they are stateless and have little hope of resettlement. Even if they are safe from war, rape and starvation they have little future thus leading to hopelessness.

At this point we can also contemplate the discoveries of the audience. The narration by Friels gives us information which may be startling to some. It gives us context and historical detail as well as statistical information which informs and builds a picture of the whole around the individuals we see on screen. It allows us to develop opinions based on factual information while the emotive strings are being tugged by the individuals involved. This is not to say the narration isn't emotive. For evidence of this read the section on techniques. Think about what you discovered

from viewing each of the episodes and how this affected your perspective, if at all.

Now to explore some other ideas or themes that you can link to discovery with this text.

### **Journeys**

Journeys are another way of describing the discoveries. The journeys can be physical such as the plane flights or the boat trip at sea but they can also be personal intellectual and emotional journeys. Some like Raye have significant moments on their journey such as her learning that Maisara had lost a daughter due to her inability to afford medicine in the camps. Others like Raquel take more time and her views evolve on the journey. Others such as Darren take time to absorb the discoveries they make and then evaluate them based on their own philosophy of life.

Remember too that the whole basis of the series is about journeys – the journeys of the asylum seekers as they try to establish a new life. The documentary makers also take each of the participants and us, the viewer, on a journey to discover the life of an asylum seeker/refugee, an experience few of us would have experienced. The journey is a great way to show discovery It is effective as it can reveal the process of discovery.

### **Freedom**

Another relevant aspect of discovery in *Go Back to Where You Came From* is the search for freedom. It can also be linked to the concept of the journey to give some unity to your essay in the Area of Study. Each of the participants gets freedom to form

their views and the freedom to express those views. They make discoveries that change how they see freedom and what freedom really is. They and we, see the Chin in a prison of their own making in the slums of Kuala Lumpur because they hunger for freedom eventually. Each of the experiences of the six have revolved around discovering why people search for freedom so avidly and why they accept so many dangers to succeed in their quest.



## LANGUAGE

### Documentary Techniques

The techniques used in a documentary are designed to create emotional pertinence and control over an audience. To do this the director and his team have to 'show not tell' with pictures and allow the audience to find its way. To assist this process a narration is often used. The narration must be relevant, simple and linked to the visuals. It is usually, as in studying this text, either first person narration as opposed to the third person omniscient narrator or the 'voice of God'. In *Go Back to Where You Came From* we have a hosted narration in parts, a third person for the footage and in parts the narrator is on screen when Corlett, the 'refugee expert' is presenting. The narration from actor Colin Friels is often emotive for what is presumed to be a detached omniscient narrator. For example, in the second episode he says things such as, 'living in squalor', 'shadow world of refugees', 'limbo existence' and the 'guide.' Corlett repeats the 'squalid' concept just in case you missed it as he narrates.

Also, when you watch each episode think about the 'set-up' that they include the audience in and the 'pay off' at the conclusion. This is where the tension is created through the idea and counter-idea. In *Go Back to Where You Came From* the idea is based around the comments from one or more of the participants about refugees/ boat people. Then the episode sets out to disprove or change that view. In the case of refugees, the director must also be sensitive to their needs and values as they have been, at times, placed under tremendous strain. Thus, the camera work cannot be obtrusive and invasive. Think about the interview with Maisara when she tells of the suffering of her family and how both

her sisters were raped. The camera moves in close to capture her expressions but also cuts away.

This raises the question of what to show which a director has control of and indeed the duration of shots, scenes and the episode itself. Obviously conflict is better television and one example of this is in Episode One when the conflict between Raye and Raquel on the fake refugee boat makes compelling television but has little to do with the issue of refugees. Yet their swearing, arguing and threats of violence makes the show effective. Also examine the introductory piece to each episode about 'the issue that divides a nation', 'strong views' and 'dangerous' that add to the drama. Even Raquel's statement 'I am a bit racist' is inflammatory. With these decisions about what to show comes a responsibility and this again raises the issue of bias in the four episodes we have to consider.

The issue of bias has been mentioned before and certainly *Go Back to Where You Came From* has been accused of bias in its presentation and representation of the issue. Yet it is up to the audience how much this bias affects them and their views. In a thoughtful article *You call this even-handed? Refugee series is strictly for the gullible*, in the Sydney Morning Herald Paul Sheehan writes,

'While the quality of the filmmaking is good, the laudatory descriptions of the program as being even-handed are overstated. It is stacked with commentary, from the narration, to the structure, to the guide, Dr David Corlett, who is immersed in the refugee industry...'

Sheehan also points to the perceptive questions asked by the participants that are never answered. In response to this criticism O'Mahoney has stated in an article in The Australian newspaper that his position was a neutral one,

*'Even those of the six who didn't change positions came to appreciate the discussion is not as simple as they had always thought...I don't want viewers to think that we want to manipulate them into being extremely welcoming of any asylum-seekers or we have a position that they are all bad and unwelcome.'*

He goes on to state that he feels *Go Back to Where You Came From* is a blend involving both reality TV and observational documentary.

The final decision must lie with the audience and it is intriguing to read some of the blogs and tweets at the time of airing which are quite extreme from both the left and right. For viewers, the main concern is how these techniques show discovery and support the ideas in the text. Look for specific examples of how when the participants discover something about life as an asylum-seeker. They are shown in close-up with expressive, often teary faces. Examples of this might be when Adam visits the hospital with the bomb victims in Jordan. Another is Raye departing from the camp in Kenya. This series uses emotive shots to show how affected the participants are by their experience and the experiences are designed to do this. Darren even notes in the show how they are being manipulated to show empathy.

The director also uses long shots, long-wide shots to orientate the audience to particular unfamiliar locations. This is more so in the foreign locations but he also does some of this with the Liverpool and Albury locations. It is clever direction to give orientation particularly to places many Australians would not

have experienced such as Kakuma, Goma and Bahgdad. We need also to note how the music over the visuals impacts on how we perceive that situation. One particularly good example of this is when the raid occurs in Malaysia. Listen to how dramatic the music is and when it cuts in and out to add to the scene. In the third episode note how the music is ominous as they discuss Kakuma and the shots of isolation and poverty. Just as they queue for food, the sounds of the camp are overlaid by the narration, 'they are escaping death, torture, rape and starvation...there are many hungry mouths but little food...'. Think about how this positions the audience. Note also, as in episode two, when they are heading into a Malaysian city how the music is Arabic in sound to highlight the Muslim nature of the country which has already been seen in the dress, 'every woman is wearing a tea towel'.

*Go Back to Where You Came From -The Response* is slightly different from the other episodes in that it is filmed entirely in a studio with a set and audience. We do get a recount of the experience to orientate viewers but there is no new footage, just a rehashing of bits of episodes. There is less conflict in this episode as the characters have basically come around to the point of view of the director, even the once racist Raquel who has come to rethink her position. Even the harder questioning of Darren who still has many valid points doesn't have the same impact. Compare how he is treated to Raye who comments 'I was surprised by some of the elements that were left out' but was already supportive of refugees. Also note the puerile questioning of Roderick about his T-shirts.

The role of Anton Enus in this episode is intriguing as he recaps and tries to make the debate interesting. He describes the show as a phenomenon. Watch how they cut to him nodding and looking

wise in close up as he responds to answers. Still a debate has been started and, if we consider the purpose of a documentary to inspire change and challenge an audience's beliefs then it has been successful. Do you think that the series has created debate and inspired change? What did you discover from your viewing? Was it a journey of discovery for you, a 'life -changing experiment?'

Finally we need to consider the series as a whole and how effective these techniques and ideas are over time. As a documentary it was timely as the issue was and still is of import in Australia. How long do you think its shelf life or longevity is? How relevant will it be in five years when the final group of students will be studying it for the HSC? Will the discoveries that the participants and audience made from it continue to have impact over time due to discoveries of new values and ways of thinking?

As well as this basic structure you will need to focus on:

**Audience** – for the essay the audience must be considered formal unless specifically stated otherwise. Therefore, your language must reflect the audience. This gives you the opportunity to use the jargon and vocabulary that you have learnt in English. For the audience ensure your introduction is clear and has impact. Avoid slang or colloquial language including contractions (doesn't, eg, etc).

**Purpose** – the purpose of the essay is to answer the question given. The examiner evaluates how well you can make an argument and understand the module's issues and its text(s). In the case of the Area of Study, markers look for a deep conceptual understanding and you must reveal understanding using examples from your prescribed text and a related text or texts. An essay is solidly structured so its composer can present ideas with clarity. This is where you earn marks. Essays do not retell the story of a text or state the obvious. They analyse rather than describe.

**Communication** – Take a few minutes to plan the essay. If you rush into your answer it is almost certain you will not make the most of the brief 40 minutes to show all you know about the question. More likely you will include irrelevant details that do not gain you marks but waste your precious time. Remember an essay is formal so do not do the following: story-tell, list and number points, misquote, use slang or colloquial language, be vague, use non sentences or fail to address the question.

## HSC STYLE ESSAY QUESTION

Remember that essay responses must respond to essay questions and when you submit a practice essay, it should have a question written at the top. Start by underlining the key words in the question.

*The Concept of Discovery may be conveyed differently in and through texts, but the result for responders is a deeper understanding of self and the world.*

*Discuss this statement with close reference to your prescribed text and two related texts.*

### PLAN

#### Introduction

Start by introducing the texts. **Argument:** The BOSTES definition for Discuss is to -Identify issues and provide points for and/or against. Consider using differing textual forms which affect how the concept of Discovery is conveyed. For example, a film will convey the concept of Discovery using visual, filmic techniques whereas a novel will use narrative techniques. Using a variety of textual forms will enable you to argue for the first half of the statement and enable you to show the different ways discovery is conveyed.

Having said this, you could argue that although specific techniques differ, the basic textual components of techniques, form, content and structure remain constant. Also consider the rubric and reflect on the different ways Discovery can be and are presented in your texts.

You need to let the marker know what texts you are discussing. You can start with a definition but it can come in the first paragraph of the body. You **MUST** state your argument in response to the question and the points you will cover as part of it. Don't wait until the end of the response to give it!

Do not forget the second part of the question, that is, the link to you as a responder and your deeper understanding of self and the world, through studying Discovery. You may like to argue that although text types and techniques differ and aspects of Discovery raised in and through texts differ, it is this variety which helps you as a responder relate the concept to your own understanding of the world and your place in it.

- (Aim to incorporate discussion of techniques when discussing text and making close textual references.)

**Idea 1**– Look to the rubric and identify what kinds of Discovery are raised in your texts.

**Idea 2**- Explore how these are raised, through selected form and relevant techniques.

**Idea 3** - Analyse their impact in terms of discovery on you as a responder. Is it a bildungsroman text. Do characters make personal discoveries, grow and learn? Is the composer him or herself a factor linked to a responder and discovery? Look at the purpose in writing the text. Explore these ideas in both your prescribed and related text or texts. In what ways have the aspects of Discovery raised in the three text enhanced your understanding of yourself and the world?

Ideas can be expanded into several paragraphs. be sure to set out paragraphs clearly using a topic sentence, explanation, examples and analysis of examples in terms of technique and link to question.

Finally, your conclusion should incorporate a summary of key ideas. Do not raise new points in a conclusion.

- Provide a final sentence that restates your argument

Make sure your conclusion restates your argument. It does not have to be too long.

## DISCOVERY: SUGGESTED RELATED TEXTS

You are often advised to select related texts that do not mirror the form of your Prescribed text. In addition, you are reminded to select related material wisely and look for links to the rubric, the concept and to highlight similarities and differences with prescribed material. Markers have noted that the judicious selection of related material is a key factor when evaluating responses. Sophisticated texts when well analysed in relation to the concept, and strongly analysed in relation to the prescribed text, will impress markers more than texts you may have happened to read at school in previous years in Stage Four or Five.

In the following list, categories are used for convenience but titles are not always exclusive to genre or text type. Many hybrid texts exist which cross boundaries of genre.

### PROSE-FICTION/NON FICTION

#### *Bypass – The Story of a Road* by Michael McGirr

About one man's journey of discovery along the Hume Highway between Sydney and Melbourne. This is a hybrid text which is part travelogue, memoir, history and romance.

#### *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift

This classic tale is about Gulliver's discovery of Lilliput. Through his arduous adventures he discovers lessons about society and humanity. The tale is a satirical view of the state of European government, and of petty differences between religions. It addresses the origins of human corruption, the conflict between Lilliputians and Yahoos, and other races.