



The Pool

DIVING IN AT BONDI ICEBERGS



AUSTRALIAN TEACHERS OF MEDIA

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<https://theeducationshop.com.au>

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**STUDY
GUIDE**



SUMMARY

Title	<i>The Pool</i>	Category	Feature-length documentary
Director	Ian Darling	Classification	M (brief coarse language)
Release date	2024	Length	95 minutes
Country	Australia	Language(s)	English
Genre	Hybrid - observational documentary, interviews, stylised 'poetic cinema' set to music soundtracks		
Synopsis	<p>Bondi Icebergs is the most photographed pool in the world. This is where generations of children have learnt to swim, where the diehard have braved the frigid waters of one hundred winters, where the young and beautiful have come to bond and bake in the hot sun.</p> <p><i>The Pool</i> is a stunning cinematic experience with a soundtrack that harks back to the 1960s and a cast of characters who each have a story to tell. It speaks to the enduring power of community and our collective longing to find it.</p> <p>No matter your background or where you're at – everyone is equal in their swimsuits.</p>		
Year levels	Years 9-12; Media Studies sections on film analysis may be relevant to tertiary film study units.		
Learning areas	English • Media Studies • Health and Physical Education		
General capabilities	Literacy • Critical and Creative Thinking • Personal and Social Capability		
Key themes/topics explored	<p>This study guide on <i>The Pool</i> examines the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Language of metaphor and symbolism in selected poems of Frost and Dickinson;• Documentary and fiction film – concepts of poetic cinema;• Film analysis of <i>The Pool</i> as a documentary – sound and vision, visual pacing, editing and music;• History, geography and design of Bondi Icebergs – the concept of an ocean swimming pool, map-making, floor plans;• The pool as a social community, a social leveller offering inclusivity;• Endorphin moments;• Director's view: the pool as an on-screen 'character';• Creating a range of illustrative and written material, including short film, fiction and promotional displays, blogs, poetry, reviews, comic strips and storyboards, through understanding, synthesising and adapting information derived from the film and further reading.		
Learning intentions	<p><i>The Pool</i> provides opportunities for students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create literary texts with a sustained 'voice', selecting and adapting appropriate text structures, literary devices, language, auditory and visual structures and features for a specific purpose and intended audience.• Evaluate how technical and symbolic elements are manipulated in media artworks to create and challenge representations framed by media conventions, social beliefs and values for a range of audiences.		
Advice	There are many sequences and moments in <i>The Pool</i> that create a sense of abstraction, of removal from the immediacy of 'reality', and from the usual way of experiencing a documentary film. Spread over ninety-five minutes it's suggested that the film may be more suited to students from Year 9-10 onwards who have developed more abstract conceptualising, thinking and observing.		
Additional information	thepoolfilm.au		
Trailer	youtube.com/watch?v=V37Xfw6XftU		

THE WAVES CRASH OVER THE POOL'S EDGE
IN BIG SWELLS OR TIDES – EARNING THIS
SPOT THE MONIKER 'SPLASH CORNER'

Bondi Icebergs is the most photographed pool in the world. This is where generations of children have learnt to swim, where the diehard have braved the frigid waters of one hundred winters, where the young and beautiful have come to bond and bake in the hot sun.

The Pool is a stunning cinematic experience with a soundtrack that harkens back to the 1960s and a cast of characters who each have a story to tell. It speaks to the enduring power of community and our collective longing to find it.

No matter your background or where you're at – everyone is equal in their swimsuits

Click Above to Watch Trailer



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CURRICULUM LINKS

English curriculum content descriptions

Year 9

- Investigate how evaluation can be expressed directly and indirectly using devices, for example allusion, evocative vocabulary and metaphor. ([ACELA1552](#))
- Analyse and explain the use of symbols, icons and myth in still and moving images and how these augment meaning. ([ACELA1560](#))
- Investigate and experiment with the use and effect of extended metaphor, metonymy, allegory, icons, myths and symbolism in texts, for example poetry, short films, graphic novels, and plays on similar themes. ([ACELT1637](#))
- Create literary texts, including hybrid texts, that innovate on aspects of other texts, for example by using parody, allusion and appropriation. ([ACELT1773](#))

Year 10

- Create literary texts that reflect an emerging sense of personal style and evaluate the effectiveness of these texts. ([ACELT1814](#))
- Create literary texts with a sustained 'voice', selecting and adapting appropriate text structures, literary devices, language, auditory and visual structures and features for a specific purpose and intended audience. ([ACELT1815](#))
- Create imaginative texts that make relevant thematic and intertextual connections with other texts. ([ACELT1644](#))
- Identify and explore the purposes and effects of different text structures and language features of spoken texts, and use this knowledge to create purposeful texts that inform, persuade and engage. ([ACELY1750](#))

The Pool may be of relevance to Senior Level English. Examples of curriculum descriptions:

Unit 1 – Investigate the relationships between language, context and meaning by:

- Explaining how texts are created in and for different contexts. ([ACEEN001](#))
- Analysing how language choices are made for different purposes and in different contexts using appropriate metalanguage; for example, personification, voice-over, flashback, salience. ([ACEEN002](#))
- Evaluating the choice of mode and medium in shaping the response of audiences, including digital texts. ([ACEEN003](#))

Unit 2 – Compare texts in a variety of contexts, mediums and modes by:

- Analysing the style and structure of texts including digital texts. ([ACEEN022](#))
- Evaluating similarities and differences between hybrid texts, for example, infotainment, product placement in movies, hypertext fiction. ([ACEEN023](#))

Units 1 and 2 – Create a range of texts by:

- Using appropriate form, content, style and tone for different purposes and audiences in real and imagined contexts. ([ACEEN011](#))
- Using strategies for planning, drafting, editing and proofreading. ([ACEEN016](#))
- Developing and sustaining voice, tone and style. ([ACEEN034](#))

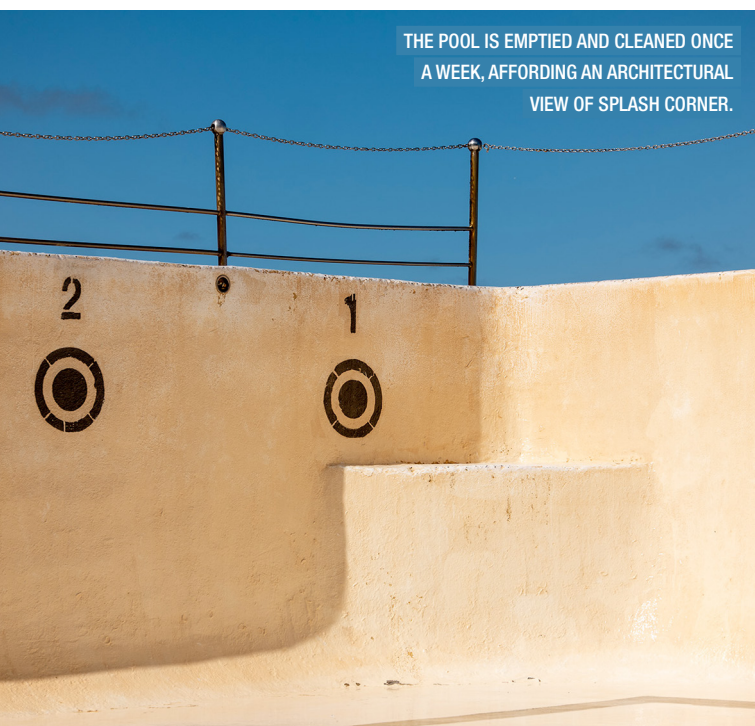
Unit 3 – Analyse and evaluate how the conventions of text influence responses including:

- How expectations of genres have developed and the effect when those expectations are met or not met, extended or subverted. ([ACEEN048](#))

Media curriculum content descriptions

Year 9 and 10

- Evaluate how technical and symbolic elements are manipulated in media artworks to create and challenge representations framed by media conventions, social beliefs and values for a range of audiences. ([ACAMAR078](#))
- Plan and design media artworks for a range of purposes that challenge the expectations of specific audiences by particular use of production processes. ([ACAMAM076](#))
- Analyse a range of media artworks from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their media arts making. ([ACAMAR079](#))



Although Media/Film Studies at senior level is not a featured inclusion in the Australian Curriculum, it is a subject included in each Australian state's senior curriculum. *The Pool* is relevant at senior level Media/Film under various applicable topic headings: documentary film, narrative studies, genre, and perhaps auteur. It is also relevant to tertiary-level college and university Film Studies courses.

Health and Physical Education curriculum content descriptions

Year 9 and 10

- Investigate how empathy and ethical decision making contribute to respectful relationships ([ACPPS093](#))
- Evaluate factors that shape identities and critically analyse how individuals impact the identities of others ([ACPPS089](#))
- Propose, practise and evaluate responses in situations where external influences may impact on their ability to make healthy and safe choices ([ACPPS092](#))
- Plan, implement and critique strategies to enhance health, safety and wellbeing of their communities ([ACPPS096](#))
- Plan and evaluate new and creative interventions that promote their own and others' connection to community and natural and built environments ([ACPPS097](#))
- Design, implement and evaluate personalised plans for improving or maintaining their own and others' physical activity and fitness levels ([ACPMP102](#))



SQUAD SWIMMERS GOING
THROUGH THEIR PACES.

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Before examining the documentary film, *The Pool*, in detail, carry out the following activities.

Poetry and poetic cinema

When you begin to view *The Pool*, you will quickly realise that you are not watching a documentary film that sets out to present a non-fiction narrative about real events or people, or important and pressing topics and themes such as climate change or racism, in a conventional, chronological or linear way, all leading towards some sort of resolution. Rather, director Ian Darling has written of *The Pool* that, 'This is a time for gentle, poetic and meditative films to also find a place in the canon [of documentary filmmaking]'. (Quoted from *The Pool* Press Kit.)

What does Darling mean by a 'poetic' film?

Perhaps before we view it, we might understand and appreciate more of *The Pool*, and of its narrative approach to its subject, if we first take a look at a form of filmmaking – applicable to both documentary and fiction – known as Poetic Cinema. (See [Poetic Cinema](#) in website references.)

- We know that the prime characteristics of the written and spoken form of poetry include word, sound and image associations to evoke for the reader or listener an almost endless possibility of meanings and interpretations through language techniques such as simile and metaphor.

As a class, read and discuss, for example, some of the well-known meditative poems of Robert Frost and Emily Dickinson. *The Road Not Taken* is perhaps Frost's most famous, most discussed and possibly most misquoted work. Also read his poems *Putting in the Seed*, and *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*.

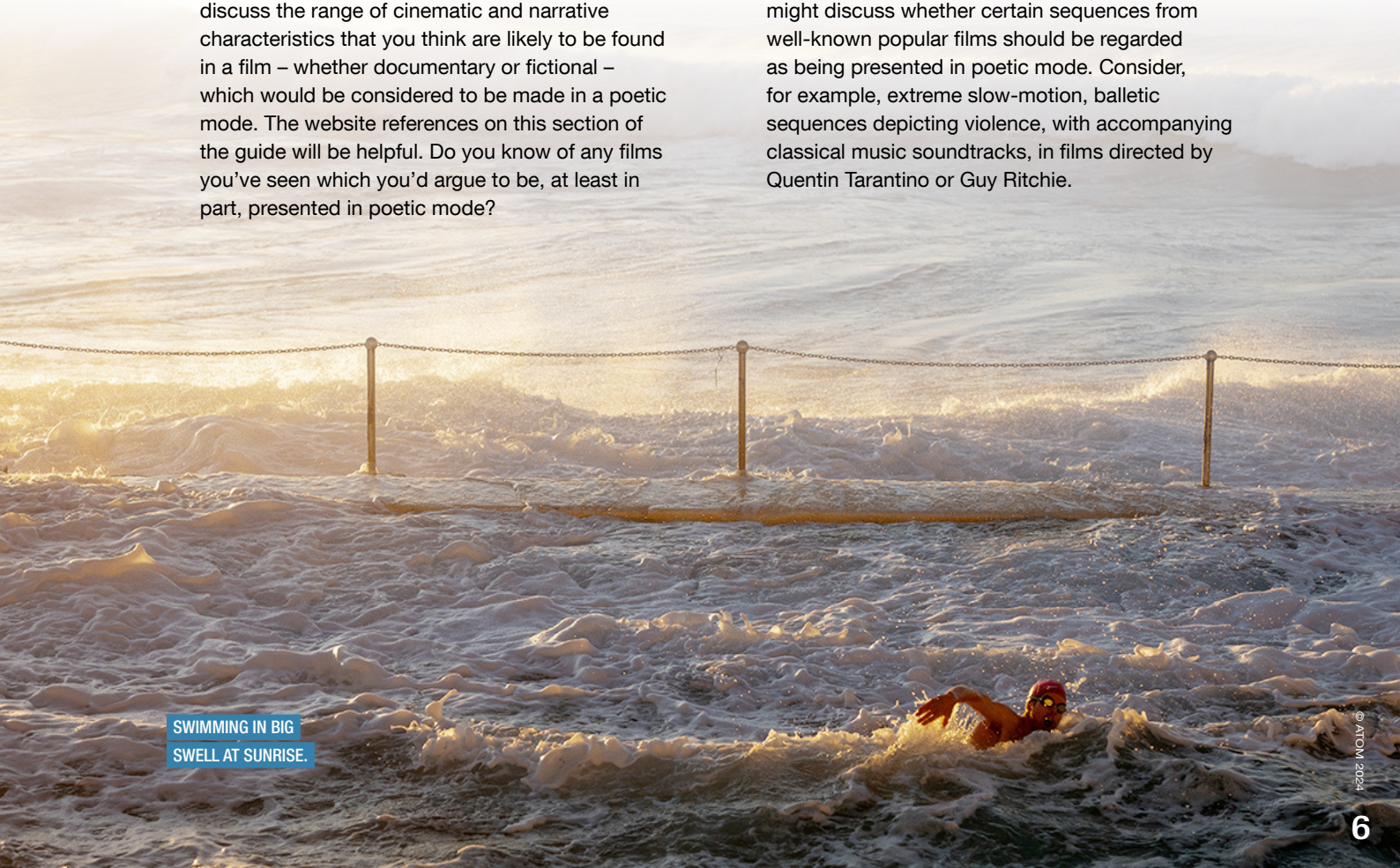
What do you think are the ideas, thoughts, impressions, senses, feelings and perceptions that wind, weave and flow through these poems? Is there more to the content of these poems than a straightforward literal interpretation?

There are many Dickinson poems to choose from, in discussing and making sense of her world view as expressed through word and phrase imagery. A brief selection might be: *I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died*, *I Felt a Funeral in My Brain*, *The Name of it is Autumn*, and *Because I Could Not Stop for Death*.

- How might you go about creating a short film (or video) either about, or based on, any one of the poems mentioned above? Would you include the words of the poem, pre-recorded, spoken on the soundtrack, with accompanying images and perhaps sound effects, or would you create a film of images and sounds without any spoken or onscreen, captioned words, to evoke an entirely cinematic, visual version of the poem? Plan and write a film script treatment outlining how you would create such a film. The planned running time of the film should be no more than about two minutes. Note that you are to think about how to create a version and a vision of the poem without actually depicting or showing anyone onscreen narrating it. It is not meant to be straight poetry reading; your task is to plan a *poetic* film.
- Following from the previous class activities, and from further reading and viewing research, discuss the range of cinematic and narrative characteristics that you think are likely to be found in a film – whether documentary or fictional – which would be considered to be made in a poetic mode. The website references on this section of the guide will be helpful. Do you know of any films you've seen which you'd argue to be, at least in part, presented in poetic mode?



Discuss, and perhaps screen them in class, drawing attention to their characteristics. You might discuss whether certain sequences from well-known popular films should be regarded as being presented in poetic mode. Consider, for example, extreme slow-motion, balletic sequences depicting violence, with accompanying classical music soundtracks, in films directed by Quentin Tarantino or Guy Ritchie.





SUMMER AT
BONDI ICEBERGS.

Bondi Icebergs — an introduction

- The entire documentary film is shot and takes place in and around the public ocean pool, Bondi Icebergs, on the south end of Bondi Bay. (There are in fact two pools – the large one for adults, and a small one nearby for children.) First, we should locate where Bondi Icebergs can be found in the Sydney landscape. On a large sheet of poster paper headed ‘All Roads and Waterways Lead to Bondi Icebergs’, draw two maps. For wider, geographical context the first will be your own scale map of Sydney, extending from Manly in the north to about Cronulla in the south, and no further east than Homebush (near Sydney Olympic Park). You may want to stylise your map with colour, illustration and lettering to capture a fun look that evokes summer, swimming, water and fitness. Prominently mark where the suburb of Bondi is, and show within it the location of the Icebergs pool. Mark the location of central Sydney and also some of the other suburbs, and important features such as the Harbour Bridge.
- For the smaller, second map, draw a more detailed map of the Bondi region, marking the location along the beach front of Bondi Icebergs. Add other features such as Bondi Junction.
- Imagining a blog entry for tourists or for friends overseas, plan and write your own history of the Bondi Icebergs. (For more information on its history and development, see [Bondi Icebergs](#) in website references). Include photographs and illustrations as required. When was it constructed, by whom, and for what purpose? Who bore the cost? Did land and the ocean waterfront have to be purchased for its location?

Why was it built as an ocean pool rather than a typical, fully-enclosed swimming pool? What, in fact, are the special or intrinsic features of an ocean pool? Do ocean pools such as Bondi Icebergs carry with them distinct dangers and therefore distinct precautions that must be adhered to? How does the Bondi pool compare to other ocean pools around the world, or even to others within Australia? Is it heated? Explain when the children’s pool was built – if it was built at the same time or added later. What are the similarities and differences between the two pools? For example, does the children’s pool have sea waves crashing into it, or is it protected?

Explain the naming of the pool and the winter swimming club name – Icebergs. What lies behind the naming of the club in reference to the requirements for membership? What must members do each year to remain members?

Note that the pool itself is a public pool. The Bondi Icebergs Winter Swimming Club is one of a number of clubs based at the pool. Each one has its own membership requirements.

- As though seen from the air, directly overhead, carefully draw and label a floor plan of the entire layout of the Bondi Icebergs pools, the associated sea walls, buildings and other, associated structures. Note that it is not necessary, for our purposes, to be specifically accurate with statements of measurement. What is a floor plan? See [website references](#).



LANE 1, AKA
'CHAMPAGNE LANE'.

VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Carry out the following activities related to your viewing of *The Pool*.

Opening sequence — an analysis

- Carefully view and listen to the soundtrack in the opening sequence [00:00–02:57]. You may need to play it through a number of times, as it is a very carefully choreographed and edited sequence combining visuals, sound and even animated effects. Firstly, take note of what we can see – the setting and environment, the action and movement of participants into, within, and out of the film frame, the lighting, and the appearance, lettering and styling of onscreen credits. In terms of sound, also take note of the accompanying, added music soundtrack, and the incidental sound effects – in this case the varying sounds of water, and of bodies within it. Note the positioning and whether there is any movement of the camera, the sequencing of camera shots and the flow of one camera shot to the next (i.e. editing – quick cutting, slow dissolving and fading). All of these various elements are working together to produce for the viewer an initial overall effect – an experience.

Discuss what you think this finely edited opening sequence alone tells or suggests to us about the overall contents, style and approach of the film, in telling a story we can comprehend. Comment on the way there is a sense of narrative progression from the opening moment of confusion and disorientation towards some sort of understanding of what is happening.

How does the camera focus and placement, angle and distance from subject contribute to this progression? Does it change throughout the sequence? Why or why not?



What role does the music play throughout the sequence? ('I Feel Free' by The Cream – the lyrics can easily be found on the internet.) Why do you think it was chosen as part of the opening sequence? Consider the forward-thrusting rhythm, beat and pulse, and the relevance of the lyrics, connecting them to the onscreen action and to the editing of one camera shot to the next.

How do the incidental sound effects play into, and impact upon the music and the visual action? Note the moments when the sound fades up and down, in and out.

Keep your eye on the appearance of each of the onscreen credits, as they also have a role to play. What happens to each credit, and why? Stylistically how does this form part of the overall pattern and texture of the sequence, and perhaps even function as a motif for the entire film?

Finally, at the end of this sequence as 'I Feel Free' comes to a close, observe how the title card is presented to us across the screen in a sudden, flickering cut, from a contemporary and cinematic 2.39:1 ratio (also known as anamorphic widescreen), to the now outdated and redundant 4:3 screen ratio commonly seen when you view an old movie or TV program, then slowly back again to 2.39:1. The camera viewpoint also changes drastically, as does the look of the film stock. Comment on the possible purpose of these stylistic choices, and whether they, too, somehow relate to the rest of the documentary. (You might also note that the end screen card, shown after the credits, is presented in the same style.)



THE BONDI ICEBERGS WINTER
SWIMMING CLUB MEMBERS LINE UP AT
THE BEGINNING OF THE SEASON.



SWIMMERS IN SPLASH CORNER.

‘Everyone is equal...’

- Note that the tag line or catch phrase for *The Pool* is ‘everyone is equal in their swimsuits’. What do you think this line means, and how is it borne out and exemplified throughout the film? Discuss, with reference to the way the large array of on-camera participants are introduced and depicted onscreen. To what extent do we get to know them, their lives, their stories and their story arc on film?

How might this presentation and choice of filmmaking procedure differ from the accepted norm in a documentary film? In other words, what would we normally expect to see in a traditional documentary? You might consider not only what we find out about the personalities who are captured and followed by the camera, but even the post-production process of onscreen identification of participants, the standard use of name captions, and the standard form of spoken voice-over narration (a narrative, often scripted voice added in post-production). Are we able to identify any of the participants by their full name?

Overall, we must ask why? Why do the filmmakers choose this unconventional way of portraying the folk who inhabit the pool? Consider again the tag line, ‘Everyone is equal in their swimsuits’. Is this equality being fabricated, created by the filmmaking process, or are the filmmakers trying to capture something about life at the pool which is already in existence, built into the fabric of the Bondi Icebergs itself?

- Plan and write a short fiction story in any style or genre of your choice – a drama, a comedy, a mystery murder, a science fiction tale or a fantasy, a story where the past and the present interact through ‘flashback’ episodes – titled *Everyone is Equal in Their Swimsuits*.

The Coach

- Keeping the film's tag line closely in mind, the first spoken human words we hear in *The Pool*, immediately as 'I Feel Free' fades out, are the loud, booming instructions called by the swimming coach and instructor, as he motivates his enthusiastic charges poolside. First, you may want to comment on whether his voice is felt by the viewer as an intrusion into the underwater atmosphere created cinematically throughout the opening sequence. You may want to question why the film director chose to do this. The coach returns many times throughout the film, his presence looming large, but he is never identified except by his first name in the closing montage of those participants who describe to camera their arm movements in the pool.



Who is this man? Is he just a pool member with a loud mouth, lording it over everyone, someone who barks orders but is, himself, never seen in the pool? What are your perceptions of him at this early point in the film?

Why don't we ever find out more about him, his life story, his achievements, successes, fears and failures? Note that this lack of information is a deliberate choice made by the filmmakers. If you knew more about him at this point, and later in other sequences, would your perception of him differ? You might like to take an educated guess as to who the coach is, and to build up a picture, to offer some suggestions about his background. But, in so doing, might we be undermining the message, the impression being created throughout the film that, 'Everyone is equal in their swimsuits'?

You will find his name listed in the end credits. Look, especially, at [93:00], as the additional information appearing onscreen might induce you to find out more. You can find an interview with the coach on the interviews page of the film's website: thepoolfilm.au

- Following from the previous activity, carry out appropriate research, then plan and write a short account of the life and achievements of Olympic and Commonwealth Games swimmer, Neil Rogers. Comment, in your written piece, on Neil's work and his overall presence at Bondi Icebergs, linking it to his own background at top level world competition. Aim your written piece specifically to junior members, children who might attend the junior pool, so that they can be educated in the legacy he left behind for others to follow. (See [Neil Rogers](#) in website references.)



FROM TOP: COACH NEIL ROGERS
• LANE EIGHT AT DAWN.

The swimmers

- Besides the coach, many other participants and pool members are given the opportunity to speak on-camera about their relationship with the Bondi Icebergs pool. Why is each of them there? Do the reasons vary, or is there a connecting thread to the reasons behind their collective presence? In fact you may ask whether the director (usually off-camera) is pursuing a particular theme about the participants, rather than regarding them individually as separate characters with their own story to tell. You may find that most of them express similar thoughts and emotions about their experiences.

Discuss what they see as the virtues, the positive values of attending and participating, the reasons behind why they regularly put themselves through some tough ordeals in all sorts of weather, and regularly feel daunted, even afraid. Why deliberately face and endure these unpleasant moments? What do you think they are trying to achieve? Why are they fighting themselves – and perhaps confronting their own inner demons and mental health? Comment on such aspects as friendship, and a particular sense of community, allied to an awareness of personal achievement, and a feeling of escape, physical or spiritual, from other parts of their lives.

- On at least three occasions, some of the speakers also refer to ‘endorphin’ moments in the pool. Explain what they mean. What are endorphins? What is their function, and purpose? What do they do to the human body, the brain, the heart? Is there a downside as well as an upside to endorphin ‘rushes’? Are they always a healthy experience – or not?
- Have you participated in any environment where you have experienced the same kind of feeling of escape, belonging, community, or endorphin rushes, as those who speak their mind and open their hearts to the audience throughout the film? It does not have to relate to swimming. It may be somewhere else on a sports field, or perhaps moments of collective happiness and achievement in taking part in, perhaps, a school play, a social event of some kind, an excursion or an outdoor camping experience, or even in belonging to a religious or political community.



Plan and write a blog entry about your personal experiences, your journey to a sense of awareness about yourself, your personal goals, your striving to be your best self through an attachment to a community of like-minded individuals.

Film analyses

As we have already seen, there are many sequences throughout *The Pool* where there is no dialogue, no verbal narration or voice-over at all, where the emphasis is purely on the beauty of the visual image, either static or in motion, as caught and expressed on camera through the art and technique of editing, the joining of camera shots, and other techniques such as slow motion and timelapse – not to mention camera angle and placement, and the use of natural light. These long sequences are carefully combined to select songs and highlighted sound effects.

- Let us view and compare three sequences. The first is at [09:19–10:49]. The song playing is ‘Heatwave’ by Martha Reeves and the Vandellas (1963). First, choosing your adjectives carefully and precisely, describe in no more than about fifteen–twenty words the atmosphere, the mood, the feeling and the life of what is being portrayed visually as one unified scene throughout the accompanying music sequence. What is the overall impression of the scene, and how does the music complement it? Comment on the relevance to the scene of the soundtrack’s title.

What does the opening close-up camera shot of the sequence convey to us? Note the coloured spinning motion – does it suggest or remind you of something connected to the music beginning to swell up on the soundtrack? Can you detect a pattern of the editing of camera shots to fit with the movements and beats of each part of the song? What other filmmaking elements and techniques are being deployed throughout the sequence – the selection of angles and distances, quick shots, longer shots, dissolves and fades. Overall, is there a story being told, a narration without a narrator?

As an experiment you may like to play the same scene through again with the soundtrack muted. Does your impression of what is happening onscreen change without the music, the beat, the rhythm and the power of Martha's voice to influence it? Discuss what other pieces of music, something more recent and contemporary perhaps, that could be used for the scene which might enhance it in a similar way, or produce an entirely different effect. For example, would it be possible to apply a sequence of music to create an elegiac effect – a sense of a lost era in time?

- Now let us view our second scene – same location, different treatment – at [\[78:28–80:00\]](#). The soundtrack is titled, 'Ritournelle et Recit chante par Mademoiselle Hilaire', by the seventeenth century French composer Jean-Baptiste Lully. First, we should note that the title of the music tells us this is meant to be sung by a woman. In what way might this reflect and comment upon the content of the visual scene?

Describe the mood being evoked by the onscreen content and action, setting and lighting in combination with the music. In what way does the editing pace – the movement and timing of one camera shot to the next – help to complement what we are seeing and hearing on the screen? Note the types of camera shots and angles used in this scene, comparing them to the 'Heatwave' scene.



FROM TOP: SOME OF THE MEMBERS OF THE PUFFERS, WHO SWIM ACROSS BONDI BAY AND BACK EVERY MORNING • CALM WATER ON A STILL DAY.

Comment on the startling, long-held close-up shot of the swimmer's face, and its impact on the viewer. What do we make of this scene? How do we respond and reflect upon it?

Overall, discuss the differences in approach to the subject the filmmakers are taking here, in comparison to the 'Heatwave' scene.

- Drawing from the entire sequence of sound and image, plan and write a short meditative fiction story about the lone swimmer, the isolation, the introspection. What is she thinking about or reflecting upon? Where will your story take both you, and the reader? Discuss the storyline possibilities in class for a range of ideas and opinions, then decide on your own approach.
- The third sequence to view is at [\[84:26–87:20\]](#). The soundtrack music is 'Timebomb' by Kylie Minogue. First, discuss the visual content. Is it telling a pictorial story and conveying a particular theme? How does the music selection complement the visuals? Also listen carefully to the sound effects and the spoken human voices that waft in and out of the visuals and the music at certain points. What kind of overall impression, atmosphere and mood is being created? Do you think the title of the song and the lyrics relate to the visuals in any way? (Note that the rather suggestive lyrics can be found on the internet.) Do you think this sequence is the same as the first one we looked at ('Heatwave'), or is it creating a different vibe, telling a different story?



Poetic cinema and the pool

Earlier in this study guide we took an introductory look at the term 'poetic cinema'. To some extent the sequences we've been viewing fit this category. There is an absence of traditional narrative development through sequential time, and the emphasis is on the constructed relationship between visual image and sound: a creation of connected, abstract moments that form patterns of movement and sound that can sometimes seem dreamlike, visionary or even hallucinatory – perhaps an alternative view of reality.

- View and discuss each of the following sequences from *The Pool*, commenting on what you think the filmmakers are intending to portray onscreen to the viewer, and your own responses – whether thoughts, sensory perceptions, emotions, imagined reactions, and where they are taking you to. After discussion, choose one or more of these sequences as inspiration for creating an impressionistic poem of sensory perceptions about nature, the world around you, the hidden

world within, or whatever takes your fancy. An alternative to composing a poem might be to create an abstract painting or a video light display.

- **Left-right movement, sound effects, silence, music** [13:00–15:07]
- **Slo-mo, close-ups** [29:05–29:56]
- **Front-on, arm patterns, foam cascade** [34:18–36:37]
- **Dissolves, timelapse** [48:53–49:23]
- **Purple haze, reborn** [52:53–56:20]
- **After the race** [62:36–63:22]
- **Storm, distant silhouettes, rainbow** [70:00–72:27]

This is a particularly interesting, stand-out sequence, as it raises some questions for discussion. What was your emotional reaction to the way the pool was being pounded during the storm? What is the importance or relevance of the rainbow at the end of that sequence? What might it have revealed to you? Why do you think the filmmakers thought this sequence was important enough to be included at this point in the film?

- **Another sequence or set of camera shots of your choice.**

The pool as character

- In director Ian Darling's words, '... we wanted to make a film where there was just one central character: the pool itself. It just happened to have lots of arms and legs, and an endless well of stories to tell.' (Quoted from *The Pool's* press kit.)

In what sense can an inanimate object – in this case an ocean swimming pool and the buildings surrounding it – be a character, along with the range of human participants appearing in the film? In your response, consider the many extracts we have looked at, and those of the pool in other guises – being emptied, cleaned, re-filled, replenished with life. You should consider all the ways the pool has been filmed – the wide range of perspectives and angles, the times of day and night, sunrise and sunset, the light and the darkness, all weather conditions, the vibrant crowds, the empty silence – the emotional impact it provokes. In this respect, why do you think it is claimed that Icebergs is the most photographed pool in the world?

For a moment, let us take the statement that the pool is a character in a story literally. Plan and write a short fiction story in which the central character is the Bondi Icebergs pool. What story might it tell over a century? What might it observe of the world within its sphere? Should the story be narrated in the third person, or would the pool be the first-person narrator as well?

An alternative to a written prose story might be to frame your subject in a comic book story, made up of panel illustrations, dialogue in speech bubbles, and other text in caption form – or go further and plan it as a storyboard for a short film (perhaps animated). For a comic or film you would first be required to write the story as a script which describes either comic pages and panels, or important camera shots. How would you present the pool as a physical character in a comic strip or an animated film?

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Carry out the following activities derived from your viewing of *The Pool*.

1. Naming the title

Giving a film, a TV series, or a novel its name is often very important as a selling point, drawing attention to it, and attracting an audience. Discuss why the producers considered *The Pool* to be a suitable title for the documentary. How many different interpretations and meanings of the word 'pool' are there, which we should consider in naming the film? Does this short title capture a sense of what the story is about? Is it too non-specific and vague? If you were asked to give the film an alternative title, what would you call it, and why?

2. General reflections

Reflecting on everything you have observed in the film, comment on the varied elements required to make a venue such as the Bondi Icebergs an attractive and welcoming venue, not only for locals who may frequent it regularly, but also a different type of venue, catering for tourists to experience.

3. Painting your version of The Pool

Create a painting or a pastel drawing of the Icebergs pool, from any physical angle or perspective you see fit. You can base your work on any art style you think is appropriate – classical, modernist, abstract, faux-naïve or hyperrealism. For an example of one style, see the fourth-listed web reference under [Bondi Icebergs](#). What style do you think the artist employed in creating this work?

4. Storyboard for a promotion

Working in pairs, plan and construct a scripted storyboard for a thirty-second promotional video about *The Pool*, designed for television screening. In groups, you may then wish to produce, record and edit your promo. Consider your use of text captions, sound and film 'grabs' of visual content, music, sound effects and dialogue to tie it all together into a cohesive, effective advertising message.

5. Review

Plan and write a 250-300 word review of *The Pool*, for a weekly arts review blog. Take into consideration that your audience may not be familiar at all with the Bondi Icebergs and its Sydney location, and may not be interested in swimming. Your task is to offer a description and a recommendation, perhaps even a judgement, about whether the film and its subject material are worth viewing, and what your readers might discover or appreciate about the documentary.



L-R: PRODUCER/SOUND RECORDIST
MARY MACRAE, CINEMATOGRAPHER BEN
CUNNINGHAM AND DIRECTOR IAN DARLING.





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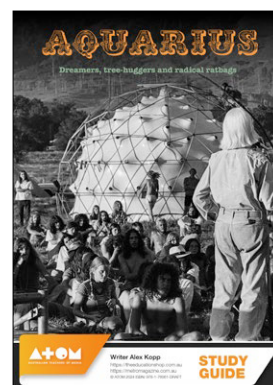
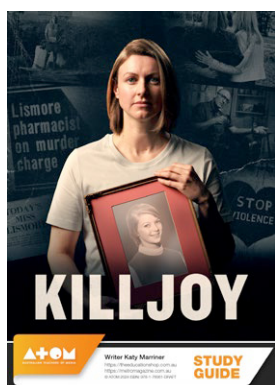
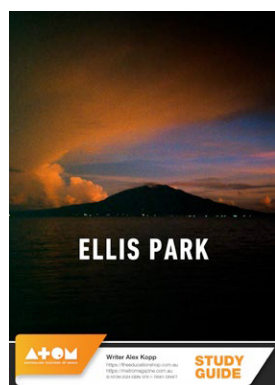
CREDITS

The Pool is made by Shark Island Productions.

sharkisland.com.au

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**SHARK ISLAND
PRODUCTIONS**



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