

The Jacket

By Graeme Lay

**Part One:**

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| Part 1 | Pre  Reading task | Reflection: “Tuaine is at school in New Zealand, but her home is on a South Sea island, where the warm waters of the lagoon are as blue as the sky above” How do you think she may feel? What differences between a New Zealand city & a South Sea island can you think of? Where would you prefer to live & why? |
|  | While | Underline any unknown vocabulary, try to guess the meaning as you read; look up the word later & write it in your notebook. |

Young people should be given chances in life - especially the chance of a good education. Sometimes that means going to study in another country, far from home and family.

Young Tuaine is at school in New Zealand, but her home is on a South Sea island, where the warm waters of the lagoon are as blue as the sky above...

June 24

I am going to use this big notebook for my diary, and write down everything I feel and do. I brought the book with me when I left home. I used it for English at my school back home, and when I left, there were still plenty of pages not written on, so it will be good for a diary. At home I read a story called The Diary of Anne Frank. It was a very sad story, but I read it lots of times. Anne said it made her feel better to write things down, it helped her with all those troubles she had, so maybe my diary will help me feel better too.

Tomorrow it will be two months since I left home to come here. 61 days. Just two numbers when I write it like that, 61 days, but it is the slowest and longest time I can remember. How can 61 days go so slowly? I still think of home all the time, and I can remember every little thing about the island, except how warm it was.

I can't remember that, because here it is so cold all the time, but when I lie here and close my eyes I can see my friends, and my family, and all my favourite places. Mama and Papa, and Mele and Metua, and Rima, and the big black rock where we swam in the lagoon, and the path that goes to the top of our mountain, and the cool wind at the top. And if sometimes I can't remember everything, there are the photos by my bed, and all my seashells.

When I was a baby, I was given to my grandparents, because I was the youngest in our family, and that is our custom. My real parents live on another island. Our village is called Vaipaka, and our house is a little bit back from the road that goes through the village, by the hill. When the last big storm - called Sharon - came, the waves from the lagoon came right over the road, but not as far as our garden, which was lucky. The wind blew all the flowers out of our garden, but at least the roof stayed on our house, not like at Mele's place. A great piece of metal blew off their roof, right over the house, and cut their goat's head off. It was terrible for the poor animal. There were some bad things that happened in our village, like Sharon, and some accidents on the motorbikes, but mostly there were good things, and I remember the good things, not the bad things.

School was good too, I liked it at the college, and I nearly always came top of my class. But I'm sorry about that now, it was coming top that probably sent me away. We had exams in the first term, and I came first or second in every exam. Mr Ashton, the teacher, came to our house and said to Mama and Papa that our school on the island wasn't good enough for me, that I should go to school in New Zealand. Mama and Papa talked about it to Uncle George. I was worried, because I didn't want to go away, but they talked about it again with Mr Ashton, and all my family put in some money for the plane and sent me here to Aunty Vaine's.

Aunty Vaine is my mother's cousin, and she has been living in Auckland for over twenty years. There's four of us here in her house: Aunty, Ta (he's seventeen), Marlene, and me. Marlene and I sleep in the same bedroom. She's six. The week after I arrived, Aunty bought me a uniform, and I started at the girls' college. I've got to stop my diary now, the video has finished, and Marlene wants to go to bed.

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| Post  Reading task | Discussion: What do we know about Tuaine’s childhood? Her family? The weather on her island? Was she happy? How did she feel about being sent to school in New Zealand? How would you feel? |

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**Part Two:**

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| While  Reading task | In this part, we learn about Aunty & her family. While you read, make notes about Aunty, Ta, Marlene & uncle Ben.  Pay attention also, to how T feels about her life. |

JUNE 25

At first, Aunty was friendly. She asked me all about home and all the relations she hadn't seen for so long, and she told me the things she used to do when she was a girl on the island. Then she asked me how much money did I bring with me from the island, and I said I didn't bring any, and she got a bit angry. I told her Mama and Papa didn't have any money to give me, and they told me that Aunty had a good job and earned plenty of money. Aunty said she worked in the chicken factory, but she didn't get much money and most of it went on paying the rent for the house. Then I asked her where was my uncle? I didn't like to ask about him at first because perhaps he had left her or something. Aunty started crying then and told me about the accident. Uncle Ben worked for a building company that made bridges. One day one of those very long, heavy pieces of metal fell on him. His back was broken, and he died in hospital. I told her I was very sorry I didn't know about the accident, nobody at home heard about it. She said Uncle Ben didn't come from our islands, he was from Niue, so she only told his family. I felt really sad for Aunty then, and bad that I came to live with her when she didn't have enough money.

JULY 1

I haven't been able to write in my diary recently. I have had too much schoolwork to do. School is very hard here, but the teachers are nice. My class teacher Mrs Price is best, she's great, she introduced me to lots of girls. But they aren't from my island, they're Samoans, and their language is very strange to me. The school is so big, too, over a thousand girls, and so many rooms. It is scary, in a school where there are so many strangers. Everyone seems cleverer than me, their English is so good. I try hard to keep up, but I get much lower marks than I did at home. I don't have enough time to do my work, that's the trouble. Aunty is working evenings at the chicken factory, and I have to get the dinner every night. The only place I can study is in the bedroom, and the noise from the video is so bad. Every night Ta gets some videos,

and always they are noisy, full of shooting and wars and shouting. I hate that Sylvester Stallone. I think it's bad for Ta to watch just that kind of video. Marlene too. Yesterday I went and asked Ta please could he turn the video down because I was trying to study in my room, and he got angry and shouted bad words at me. He thinks he's so special. What a laugh, he's just a stupid boy who can't get a job. He won't turn down the video. I'm going to bed now.

JULY 5

It's Sunday, but we didn't go to church. Aunty used to go to church but she never goes now. When I asked why, she said she didn't believe in God any more. I thought that was terrible and I asked her why. She said it was because God took Uncle Ben away from them, and left them with no one to take care of them, and not enough money. I don't know if that's right, but I can understand the way Aunty feels. I'm not sure about God. He can be very cruel sometimes, even to good people like Anne Frank and Uncle Ben.

In the afternoon we took the bus to visit Uncle Ben's grave. There is a smiling photo on the grey stone, and shiny black letters,

BENJAMIN FILIGI, AGED 48 YEARS, MUCH LOVED HUSBAND AND FATHER.

We all cried at the grave, even Ta, when Aunty put the flowers on it. In the photo on his grave, Uncle Ben looks like he was a nice man.

JULY 10

I didn't go to school today. I wanted to, but it's a long way and I have to get the bus, and the bus ticket costs a lot of money. Aunty said she didn't have any money left. She was getting angry with me, so I thought I will walk to school tomorrow instead of getting the bus. Today I tried to do my schoolwork by myself at home, but I didn't do very well.

JULY 11

I am very tired tonight. This morning I got up at six o'clock and made some sandwiches for my lunch, and I left before any of the others were up. It was still dark, and very scary because there was nobody in the streets. I walked right down Dominion Road, and slowly the sky got lighter. My school bag was hurting my shoulder, and I was trying to remember the way the bus went from the time when I had a ticket. In the end I got to the school, but it took a long long time and I was late, and the teacher at the gate took my name and I had a detention. That was the first time I ever had one. My class teacher Mrs Price asked me why I was late. I didn't like to tell her my Aunty didn't have any money for the bus, so I said I slept in. Mrs Price asked me how I was getting on here, and she seemed a bit worried. At lunchtime she brought a fifth-form girl called Moana who was from my country to see me. Moana and I talked in our language. She doesn't come from my island, but I knew some cousins of hers. I enjoyed talking to Moana, but it made me sad because I began thinking about home and all the people I knew.

When I told Moana about walking to school, she took me to the school library and showed me a street map. We saw that there was a much shorter way for me to come to school, I don't have to follow the bus route. Moana asked me if I would like to come to her place one day, but I saw on the map that she lives at Te Atatu, too far away from my place.

I walked home that quicker way that I found on the map, but because of my detention I didn't get home until six o'clock. I am very tired tonight, I can't write any more.

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| Post  Reading task | Reflection/ Discussion:  1.Do you think Aunty’s family is a happy one? Why/ why not?  2. What does T. think of her school & her teacher, Mrs Price?  3. Is T doing well at school? What makes it hard for her to study?  4. What religion are T & her relatives? How does Aunty now feel about God, & why? How does T feel & why? What would you say to her? |

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**Part 3:**

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| Part 3 | Pre Reading task | Vocabulary: 1.Money you spend on public transport is called  a) the ticket b) the fare c) the receipt 2.**Pedestrians** are people who travel a) on foot b) by bus c) to work every day.  3. A workplace where goods are made is called a) an institution b) a laboratory c) a factory.  4. Where can you NOT have an **ache?** a) head b) liver c) stomach c) ear d) tooth |
|  | While | Underline any unknown vocabulary, try to guess the meaning as you read; look up the word later & write it in your notebook. |

JULY 12

Aunty gave me two dollars this morning. I had to decide if I will spend it on the bus fare or some lunch. There was only fried bananas for breakfast because Aunty doesn't get paid until tomorrow, so I decided to walk to school and buy my lunch. At the end of one street there was a bridge over the motorway that was just for pedestrians. I stopped and looked down at the motorway. All those cars! It was like a great river running into the city. Then it started to rain. It rained and rained, very heavy, like it does at home, but very cold. I don't have a coat or jacket, so I got wet through, on my hair, down my neck, on my legs, in my shoes. I kept on walking towards school, and getting wetter and wetter and colder and colder. Then I saw a clock on a building that said five minutes to nine. That was too late for school so I turned round and walked home again, and I was so cold I had to get into bed to keep warm. I didn't get up until Marlene came home from school.

JULY 13

Aunty is working daytime at the factory now, so she told Marlene and me to stay home from school and do the shopping. We walked to the supermarket and after we had done the shopping there was some money left over. We were very hungry, so I got us some Kentucky Fried Chicken for lunch. It was so good! Marlene and I took the chicken to the park and ate it there. When people went past us, they stared. I knew they were thinking, why aren't those girls at school? Maybe they would tell the police, so I said to Marlene come on, we ought to get home

now. I felt bad about using Aunty's money for Kentucky Fried Chicken, and I told Marlene not to say we had it. I won't do that again. I went to bed in the afternoon, I didn't feel very well. My head aches and I think I'm getting a cold.

JULY 18

I didn't write in my diary for a few days, because I stayed in bed with a really bad cold. I felt miserable. I've missed a lot of school now, and I don't know how I will catch up. Exams are next month and I'm very worried about them. Always at home I did well in exams, but I can't here. I lie on my bed and stare at my photos and the trochus shell that Papa gave me. When I put the shell to my ear, I can hear the lagoon whispering to me. The trochus shells are very special to us. Once every year the people from the villages can get the trochus from the lagoon, but only a few for each family, so there will always be more for next year. The shells are polished for the tourists. But Papa polished this trochus just for me, and it is so beautiful with all the different colours, it is like holding a rainbow in my hand. Even the darkness here doesn't stop the trochus from shining.

JULY 19

I had a very bad day today. When I woke up, I decided I must go to school and catch up my work so I will do well in exams and get a good report to send home to Mama and Papa. So I said to Aunty 'I'm going back to school, 'I'm walking but please could I have some money for my lunch? Then Aunty got very mad, and she shouted at me: 'I've got no money left for you! I haven't even got enough money for my own children! Why did you have to come here anyway?'

I told her I didn't really want to come, and I'm sorry for all this trouble I am giving her. I said I don't like it here and I want to go home. Aunty got even angrier and said she didn't even have enough money for the bus, so how is she going to pay for a plane ticket? She said she didn't ask me to come here, she only said yes because she couldn't say no to her family. She said if I want to go home my family should send the money to pay, and I said they couldn't because they spent all their money sending me here. I felt really miserable then and ran out of the room, crying.

Everything here is money. Money for food, money for buses, money for warm clothes, money for shoes. Back home we only need money for the motorbike and a bit of food from the shop. We get everything from the lagoon and the fields, and we don't worry about money. But here money makes me frightened, because there isn't enough, and I feel bad that Aunty has to get more because of me. I don't know what to do. There is no telephone here to ring, or at home. All I can do is lie on my bed and stare at my photos and hold my trochus shell. No school again today.

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| Post  Reading task | Reflection/ Discussion:  1.T has a trochus shell. Why does she love it so much? Do you have anything special like that?  2.T can’t speak to her family while she is in NZ. Why not?  3. People’s attitude to money is different on the island & in NZ. IN what way? Which way is healthier, do you think? |

**Part 4:**

JULY 20

Raining again. I didn't go to school. I did some cleaning in the house and watched some TV There was a knock on the door but I didn't answer it. The person put a letter in the letter box, and later I went out to get it. It was addressed to Aunty, and I opened it. It said because I hadn't been to school, my Aunty should visit the school immediately. I put the letter in the rubbish. I don't want Aunty to get mad again, but I'm worried. I know it's against the law to not go to school but I can't go back. I'm too far behind. Perhaps I can leave school and get a job in an office. That would help Aunty with the money.

JULY 21

So much happened today, I never had a day like it in my life. Ta gave me some money for the bus, and told me how to get downtown. I caught the bus and ended up in Queen Street, the first time I have been there. So many grand buildings! It was like a TV programme. I began to walk up Queen Street, but there was a freezing cold wind, and then it started to rain, and felt even colder. I couldn't stop staring in the shop windows. All those lovely things! In one shop they were selling holidays, and there was a big photograph of home, showing my island! It was a very beautiful picture, the lagoon so blue, and the sea all around so dark, and the whiteness where the waves break on the reef round the lagoon. I wanted to say to people in the street, 'Look, there's my island, isn't it beautiful?' But all the people were just hurrying past, not stopping, not noticing.

I kept on walking up Queen Street, I was looking for a clothes shop, because I needed a jacket. The wind went right through my clothes, I felt I wasn't wearing anything at all. I came to a very big shop and went in. There were lots and lots of jackets, but I saw one of the shop people staring at me, so I went back out into the cold and kept on walking. After a while I came to another shop which sold jackets. I was very worried about what I was going to do, but I was so cold and I didn't really care how wrong it was. I just didn't want to get caught. I went into the shop and started looking at the jackets. I had a white supermarket bag in my pocket, and I got it out, took a blue jacket and put it in the bag as quickly as I could. My hands were shaking, and I wanted to run, but instead I walked around slowly and pretended to look at some coats, then I walked out. I didn't stop until I got to the bridge over the motorway. I took out the jacket and saw the price on it - 125 dollars! I put it on. It was so warm! It's got wool inside and it keeps the rain out and everything. I wore it to just before I got home. Then I put it back in the bag and hid it under my bed.

JULY 22

I couldn't sleep all last night. It was very bad to take that jacket from the shop. The church says you must not steal, and I can't forget that. I have heard it all my life. I won't wear the jacket again. I am too ashamed. Anne Frank did not steal, not even food when she was nearly dead from hunger.

JULY 23

Saturday today. Ta got three videos, all fighting and shooting. I can hear through the wall, and it sounds like a war is going on. At home on Saturday night we used to go across to the big holiday hotel on the little island of Tokoa. We used to sit under the trees and have fruit drinks, and watch the dancing for the tourists. It was beautiful there, and I loved the dancing and the music. I want to dance at Tokoa when I am older. I decided what to do about the jacket. On Monday I will take it back to the shop.

JULY 25

So much happened today. I will have to write it down very carefully to make sure I don't miss anything. When I woke up I put the jacket in my school bag and told my Aunty I'm going to school. I walked into town and waited until it was after nine o'clock, then I walked to the shop. There weren't many people inside, and I went over to where the jackets were and quickly started to take the jacket out of my bag. But as I did it, I looked up and saw a lady with grey hair watching me from the other side of some dresses. She saw what I was doing and came over.

'What are you doing? Did you take this?' she said. Her voice was very cross. I couldn't explain to her that I was bringing it back because I had taken it before. I thought she wouldn't believe me. She said, 'Come with me,' and she took my arm and we went over to the back of the shop. I started to cry.

We went into an office, and there was a man in there sitting at a desk. He was a young man in a suit. The lady told him she had found me taking the jacket, and the man said, 'Is this right?' and I just nodded. I couldn't stop crying, so I couldn't explain. I will have to go to court, I thought, and my family will be so ashamed of me.

The man told me to sit down and he rang someone on his telephone. 'It's a shoplifter,' he said. Then the man asked me my name and my address and my school, and I told him those things.

After a bit a police lady came in, and the shop lady went out. The police lady was young and pretty, with dark hair. She sat down and asked me questions in a kind voice, and it was easier to talk to her than those other ones. I told her all about the jacket and what I did.

She said to the man, 'I think she's telling the truth, and I think we should talk to someone from the school first.'

The man looked cross, but he said, 'All right, I have to agree. This is unusual.'

'Very unusual,' the police lady said. 'I never heard of a shoplifter who took back what she stole.' She smiled at me, and asked, 'Who would you like us to talk to from school?' When Mrs Price came in, she looked just as usual, not worried or anything. But I started crying again because I was so ashamed, and she sat down next to me and said, 'Don't worry, Tuaine, everything will be all right.'

Then she and the police lady talked, and they seemed really friendly to each other. I don't think the shop manager liked that and he still looked angry. Mrs Price asked me why I hadn't been to school. She has got grey hair, but her face is young and she talks in a very kind way. I told her about the money, and Aunty and my uncle and how he was killed. And about the exams and how I was worried about them, and how I got cold when I went out and how I took the jacket. I said I was very ashamed for what I did.

When my story was finished, Mrs Price looked at the police lady, and then they both looked at the manager. The police lady said, 'The jacket has been returned, Mr Jackson, and I really don't think this girl is a thief.' The manager didn't look at her, but he nodded his head.

I said to him, 'I'm very sorry I took your jacket. I will never do it again.' He stood up and nodded again, and Mrs Price said, 'I'll take you home now, Tuaine.'

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| Post  Reading task | 1.How did T feel after she ‘shoplifted’ the jacket & what did she decide to do with it?  2. How did the shop manager, the policewoman & Mrs Price react to T’s (true) story of the jacket? Were they fair to her?  3. T took the jacket because she was so cold – she really needed it & she didn’t have the money. Is shoplifting always ‘wrong’? If not, in what circumstances is it morally acceptable? |

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**Part 5:**

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| Part 5 | Pre  Reading | Prediction: This is the end of the story. Do you think it’s a happy ending? What do you think happens? |

Mrs Price and I sat in her car outside my house. She talked slowly and I felt she was thinking deeply about everything she was saying.

She said, 'We can give you extra lessons at school to help you catch up. And I'll find out if your Aunty can get some money from the government, I'm sure she can. That will help with the clothes problem...'

Then Mrs Price stopped, and she looked at me for a long time without speaking. She has very clear grey eyes, very kind and understanding, and her eyes seemed to see a long way into me.

'Or,' she said in a slow voice, 'would you just like us to arrange for you to go home?'

I looked back into those grey, kind eyes. The way she said it, I knew it was really possible. Tears came back into my eyes. Through them I saw a house, and faces, and the lagoon, shining and blue.

'I would like to go home,' I said.

- THE END -

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| Post  Reading | Did you predict the ending correctly? Does T make a good decision? What would you choose to do in those circumstances? |