Character
1. The main character in this book is a 12-year old boy mad about sport. He is also a tremendously strong character. Write a character description of Jamal. At the end of your descriptions, write a list of 10 appropriate adjectives that describe him. Don’t repeat these words – use a Thesaurus if necessary. (1, 2, 5, 7)
2. How is Jamal made to seem likeable? (1, 7)
3. Jamal could be described as an “innocent abroad”. Find out what the term means and show how it applies to him. (2, 7)

Style
4. How has Gleitzman managed to write a book which is simultaneously humorous and serious? (1, 9)
5. In Boy Overboard Gleitzman uses lots of similes and metaphors, such as “like a buzzard with a bellyache”; “my heart has a missile attack”; “my insides are quivering like goats in a bombing raid” etc. What does this language tell us about the places the characters come from? (orientation) (1, 4, 7, 9, 10)
6. In Chapters 34 and 35 from p 151 onwards, Jamal makes a number of statements about Australia and Australians that he has learned over the last few weeks: “Australians are …really generous.”; “Australians are really good at calming you down.”; “Australians … you trust them.”; “Australians can be a bit over-protective.”; “… kind Australian sailors”; “Australians are so good at thinking of others.”; “… Aussies are so decent”. Readers know Jamal doesn’t have any reason to be so positive. Choose two of these statements (or others you have found) and explain how Gleitzman has used irony to turn our supposed good qualities against us. (1, 7,9)
7. Why do you think Gleitzman has used a pun in the title. (Look at all the possible meanings of ‘overboard’ to do this.)(7)
8. Why do you think Gleitzman tells us so much about Jamal’s ancestry? (7)
9. Explain the symbolism of the candlestick. (7)
Theme (Questions 10 and 11 can be done in pairs).
10. What is it about sport (compared to life in general) that makes it a useful motif (repeated theme or image) to make a point in this novel(1, 7, 9, 10)
11. In this book, who would you describe as heroes/heroines/ and villains, or perhaps the words protagonist and antagonist would work better. Make a list of who belongs where. For each person, give an incident that helped you make your decision.(1,5,7)

Creative Responses
13. Write a diary entry for Jamal, at the end of the book. As Jamal, what have you learned from your experiences that has dramatically enhanced your knowledge of human beings and the ways they behave? (1, 2, 5, 9)
14. Write a ‘speech’ for Andrew to make to his commanding officer expressing his views about what should happen with Jamal and people like him. (1, 2, 5)
15. In pairs, create a storyboard for a short scene in one of the books, assuming it was being made into a film. (1, 2, 3)

Library Research
Research the Declaration of Human Rights and the Rights of the Child. Are the people in the book being treated according to these declarations, which our country has signed?

If time allows, we’ll look at Morris Gleitzman’s own website too.
And the documentary “Punished, Not Protected”.