

Teacher's notes

Bangu the Flying Fox:

A dreamtime story of the Yuin People of Wallaga Lake

Story retold by Jillian Taylor, illustrated by Penny Jones and Aaron Norris

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Bangu the Flying Fox is a Dreaming story told by the Umbarra Cultural Tour Group from Wallaga Lake, on the far south of New South Wales. This region has been home to the Yuin people for many thousands of years. The Umbarra Cultural Tour Group keep the traditions of their people alive through their dedication and their work.

With kind permission from Mervyn Penrith and the Umbarra Cultural Tour Group, this story is retold by Jillian Taylor, and illustrated by Penny Jones and Aaron Norris. The authors, illustrators and Aboriginal Studies Press thanks Mervyn Penrith and the Umbarra Cultural Tour Group for their assistance.

All efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of this material. If you believe something to be in error please contact Aboriginal Studies Press (asp@aiatsis.gov.au).

INTRODUCTION

Bangu is a confused flying fox who cannot work out if she is a bird or an animal. She has wings like a bird, but fur like other animals. When the birds and animals fight, Bangu aligns herself with whichever side is winning. One day Bangu is taught a lesson by both the birds and the animals, both of whom are fed up with her lack of loyalty. Poor Bangu ends up with no friends at all.

Bangu the Flying Fox makes an ideal text for study at the Early Stage 1 level of the NSW syllabus. This Dreaming story from the Yuin people of NSW offers

a simple narrative with an obvious didactic purpose, making it an ideal text for literacy in the early years. As a Dreaming story it offers insights into Aboriginal culture so it can be used as a teaching tool for SOSE or Aboriginal Studies.

The book has potential to be used as part of an integrated unit or as an isolated teaching tool for application in the following learning areas:

- Literacy (Stage 1)
- Human Society and its Environment (Stage 1)
- Science (Stage 1)
- Visual Arts (Stage 1)
- Personal Development (Stage 1).

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Activity: Dreaming stories and Indigenous culture

Curriculum Links: Aboriginal Studies, SOSE, literacy

NSW Syllabus Outcomes: CU.S 1.3, ENS1.5, MBC.1, MBC.2

Resources:

Dust Echoes: Ancient Stories, New Voices

<http://www.abc.net.au/dustechoes/dustEchoesFlash.htm>.

The Little Red Yellow Black website, Who Are We? Our Societies

<http://lryb.aiatsis.gov.au/who/societies.html>

Indigenous Australia, *The Dreaming – Origins*

<http://www.indigenoustralia.info/the-dreaming/dreaming-origins.html>.

Part a)

Introduce students to a range of Dreaming stories. There are a wide range of published stories, and many on the internet, although it is important to choose stories from a reputable source, that is, ones told with the permission of the Aboriginal people whose story it is.

Explain that Dreaming stories are stories that belong to Indigenous Australians and that they have a purpose: to teach a lesson or explain the creation of something. Explain the importance of storytelling in Aboriginal culture – Indigenous languages were not written languages – information was conveyed in stories, songs, dances or in paintings for people to remember. It is only recently that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories have been written down.

It is very important to emphasize the concept of Indigenous ownership of Dreaming stories.

Part b)

Teacher reference:

The Dreaming is a unique religious concept. It refers to the time when ancestral beings are said to have spread across the continent. As they went, they created human society and its rules, languages, customs and laws. Aboriginal people still follow those laws today. The Dreaming embraces the past, the present and the future. Aboriginal art and songs celebrate the connection between the creator beings, ancestral country and the people. Individuals and groups have connections to particular 'Dreamings'. Dreaming stories are sometimes called Creation stories.

<http://lryb.aiatsis.gov.au/who/societies.html>

Discuss with students what they know of the Dreaming. Have they heard of it? Do they know any stories?

Give students Dreaming stories to read on their own, even if they are just looking at the pictures. Show the ABC 'Dust Echoes' website, or other animated versions of Dreaming stories. Use this session as an exploratory time. Students can read independently, or in groups, to familiarise themselves with the genre.

Additional activities

Activity: Arrange an excursion to an Indigenous cultural organisation, or an institution where information about traditional Indigenous lives can be accessed. If there is no cultural centre in your area, the mainstream museums and galleries have excellent Indigenous programs.

Activity: If possible, invite an Indigenous community member to speak to the class about their understanding of their Dreaming and their heritage.

Activity: *Using Bangu the Flying Fox* to teach literacy

Curriculum links: Literacy, personal development, Aboriginal Studies

NSW Syllabus Outcomes: TS1.1, TS1.2, TS1.3, TS1.4, RS1.5, RS1.7, RS1.8, WS1.11, WS1.13, IRS1.11

Resources:

Board of Studies, 1998, English K–6 Modules, Board of Studies, NSW Government

http://k6.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/files/english/k6engmodules_syl.pdf.

Part a)

Introduce *Bangu the Flying Fox* to students. Explain where the story comes from, and that it belongs to the Yuin people. Point out that the story has been 'retold'. It does not belong to Jillian Taylor; it was told to her by Mervyn Penrith.

Read the story and then discuss with students. Did they like it? What do they think the message is? Why didn't Bangu know whether she was a bird or an animal? What is a flying fox? These questions will establish students' prior knowledge so that learning activities can be catered to their abilities. They will also provide an introduction to the other areas of study.

The NSW Board of Studies has published an excellent document as part of their K–6 English Syllabus which provides instructions for teaching the elements of English required by the syllabus: Board of Studies, 1998, English K–6 Modules, Board of Studies, NSW Government

http://k6.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/files/english/k6engmodules_syl.pdf

The following modules have been selected as appropriate for teaching *Bangu the Flying Fox* in Stage 1 literacy:

- recount
- narrative
- response.

Part a)

Recount and response

As a group, have students discuss what they remember about the text, and encourage them to give you personal responses about how they felt about the story.

Recount the text as a joint reconstruction using words such as ‘when’, ‘then’, ‘after’. Focus on the verbs and nouns in the text.

Provide students with a set of jumbled sentences recounting the story of Bangu. Students should then cut out and reorganise the steps in time order.

Finally, provide students with a set of ‘time words’ and have students attach the appropriate time words to each sentence to complete the text.

Part b)

Narrative

Introduce students to the terms ‘orientation’, ‘complication’, ‘resolution’ and ‘coda’, and discuss them in relation to the text. Retell the Bangu story as a class, using these headings.

Again, together, and using the narrative structure, recreate a new story that teaches a lesson. It may be about being honest, about being a good friend, about looking after each other etc. (Remember that at this point it is important not to refer to the story as a 'Dreaming story'.)

Have students illustrate the new class story and make into a book.

Activity: Traditional landowners

Curriculum Links: SOSE, Aboriginal Studies

NSW Syllabus Outcomes: CU.S 1.3, ENS1.5, MBC.1

Resources:

Horton, D 1996, *Aboriginal Australia Wall Map*, Aboriginal Studies Press, AIATSIS, Canberra

http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/aboriginal_studies_press/aboriginal_wall_map/map_page and

A simple large-scale map of Australia.

Part a)

Using a large map of Australia, identify, as a class, where New South Wales is. Then mark Lake Wallaga on the map where for students. As a class, identify where students live – state and city.

Distribute photocopies of an outline of Australia (with state divisions) and have students colour in New South Wales and mark where Lake Wallaga is (copying from your example). Then have them mark in a different colour where they live on the map.

Part b)

Compare the mainstream map of Australia with the 'Aboriginal Australia Map'.

If a hard copy is not available, it's available online at:

http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/aboriginal_studies_press/aboriginal_wall_map/map

[page](#). This can be accessed by you on a data projector, or by students individually, as part of a learning-technology lesson.

Discuss with students how the Aboriginal language map differs from the mainstream map of Australia. Explain what the coloured areas are. Identify the traditional country of the Yuin nation. Then, using students' understanding of their own location on the map, identify the language groups of the land that they live on. Students can mark this on their maps.

Activity: The Yuin People

Curriculum links: Aboriginal Studies, SOSE, Aboriginal languages

NSW Syllabus links: CUS1.3, ENS1.5, UL.1, MBC.1, MBC.2, TS1.1, TS1.2

Resources:

Australian Museum, *Umbarra*,

<http://australianmuseum.net.au/movie/Umbarra/>.

Umbarra Cultural Centre, *Umbarra Stories*

[\[search.nla.gov.au/apps/textsearch/action/searchget?query=umbarra+cultural+centre&x=0&y=0\]\(http://pandora-search.nla.gov.au/apps/textsearch/action/searchget?query=umbarra+cultural+centre&x=0&y=0\)](http://pandora-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Cruse B, R Kirby, L Stewart and S Thomas, 1994, *Bittangabee Tribe: An Aboriginal story from coastal New South Wales*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

Part a)

Show students the video <http://australianmuseum.net.au/movie/Umbarra/>, a story told by Warren Foster, which explains why the Yuin people still live on their land.

Part b)

Umbarra means 'black duck' in Wallaga language. Using the Umbarra

Cultural Centre resource, [\[search.nla.gov.au/apps/textsearch/action/searchget?query=umbarra+cultural+centre&x=0&y=0\]\(http://pandora-search.nla.gov.au/apps/textsearch/action/searchget?query=umbarra+cultural+centre&x=0&y=0\), introduce students to more Wallaga words. Create a](http://pandora-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

worksheet where students can label pictures with the appropriate Wallaga words.

Part c)

Explain to students the different types of Yuin bush tucker and bush medicine using the Umbarra Cultural Centre resource as a guide.

Allocate students a plant or animal from the resources and have them illustrate and annotate this for inclusion in a class book about Yuin bush tucker.

Note: The book *Bittangabee Tribe* may be useful as a complementary text for this activity. Though the book doesn't explicitly state that it about the Yuin people, the area was traditionally occupied by descendants of the Yuin Nation. Bittangabee Bay is significantly lower down the coast than Wallaga Lake, but gives an idea of traditional life for Indigenous people on the southern New South Wales coast. The chapter Walkun and What the Middens Tell Us reveal the way Aboriginal people have lived in coastal areas and lived off the sea's resources. Life on the Beaches includes conversations with Aboriginal people talking about their experiences of catching and eating 'mutton fish', also called 'abalone'.

Activity: Birds and mammals

Curriculum links: Science

NSW Syllabus Outcomes: LT ES1.3, LT S1.3, TS1.1, TS1.2

Discuss with students why Bangu was confused about whether she was a bird or an animal. Explain to students that really birds are animals too, but there are immediate differences between birds and other animals that make them seem like different animals altogether.

For example:

- birds have wings
 - most birds can fly
 - birds have two legs
 - birds have feathers
 - birds have beaks.
 - other animals have four legs
 - other animals have teeth
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- other animals have fur or scales
 - other animals have noses instead of beaks.
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- Bangu had wings and two legs. So maybe she was a bird?
 - Bangu had fur and teeth and a nose. So maybe she was another animal?

Explain to students (using simple criteria such as those listed above) the differences between birds, mammals and reptiles. There is no need to go into detailed detail as it will confuse students, and it can be covered in later years. Draw, photocopy or print pictures of all the animals in the book. Also, print a photograph of a flying fox which allows students to see its features clearly. Using the criteria, classify each animal as a bird, mammal or reptile. Then classify Bangu by discussing which type of animal she is most similar to. For example, she has wings like a bird, but she has fur, a nose, and teeth like a mammal.

Activity: Illustration

Curriculum links: Visual arts, literacy

NSW Syllabus outcomes: VAS1.1, VAS1.4

Discuss the illustrations in *Bangu* with students. What qualities do they have? Are the colours rich? Are the lines sharp or blurred? Are the illustrations realistic? Can you still tell what the pictures are of?

Introduce students to pastels. These are sticks of pigment, with a chalky texture and are different from oil pastels. Although pastels can be used on standard cartridge paper, drawings will smudge easily and the colour often doesn't stick to it. Inexpensive textured paper can be purchased from art shops. Additionally, your art department may have pastel pencils which will offer students more control over their drawings.

Demonstrate how pastels have been used in *Bangu* using smudging and layering colours. Very little black has been used except for the occasional outline. Point out the different landscapes in the story and the way that pastels have been used to achieve different colours and shadows. Also, point out the use of lines for features on the foreground such as grass and trees.

Have students draw their own landscapes using pastels using smudging and layering techniques. They can draw a rough outline in lead pencil as a guide. Students who are more confident or capable with the technique may choose to add trees or other natural features.