

Teacher Notes

Do Not Go Around the Edges

written by Daisy Utemorrah

illustrated by Pat Torres

Teacher Notes prepared by Christina Wheeler

OVERVIEW

In *Do Not Go Around the Edges*, Wunambal elder, Daisy Utemorrah, shares her life's journey through cleverly interwoven poetry, parables and prose. Aboriginal dot form and contemporary artwork add rich layers of meaning to create a remarkable collection of memories combined with an exploration of country and tradition.

Exploring themes such as creation, the Dreaming, family and the importance of storytelling, *Do Not Go around the Edges* will appeal to adults and children alike.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

Daisy Utemorrah was an elder of the Wunambal people from the Mitchell Plateau area in the far north Kimberley. She was born in 1922 at Kunmunya Mission and her family background gave her fluency in three Aboriginal languages. Daisy has been recognised for her work as a poet and a teacher. Her first book, *Do Not Go Around the Edges* was published by Magabala in 1991. It won the Australian Multicultural Children's Book Award the following year and was also shortlisted for the Children's Book of the Year for Younger Readers.

THEMES

The following aspects of Indigenous culture feature in the text:

- Traditions
 - Relationship with nature
 - Communal takes privilege over the personal
 - Hunting; collecting honey and bandicoots
- Dreamtime, Spirituality and Creation
 - Relates to ancient stories of the Dreaming
 - Shares spiritual aspects of the Wunambal people - Wandjina; Ngarmarali, Wandalie, Wanarbri
- Family
 - Family structure is unique; father had three wives, one of whom he took after his brother died
- Country
 - Belonging to country; connectedness
- Storytelling
 - The importance of oral storytelling in Aboriginal culture; offers a path toward cultural understanding

- Language
 - Daisy Utemorrah speaks several languages; she is a linguist and teacher
- Artwork
 - Traditional and contemporary artwork; the pieces tell stories

WRITING STYLE

Do Not Go Around the Edges offers different levels of narrative; each page has three distinct threads, each telling Daisy Utemorrah's story. Her autobiography sits at the bottom of each page, while the corresponding poem sits inside a border nestled within Pat Torres' illustrations. Each adds its own layer of meaning to the text.

LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

These notes have been written in context with the Australian Curriculum. The appendix highlights relevant cross-curriculum priorities and content descriptors across a range of year levels that the following activities address.

CULTURAL NOTES

An effective way to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander information is to regionalise it within your curriculum. Educating your students about their own local history, and bringing to life the Indigenous past of your region is a wonderful way to start.

- View the map depicting Australian Indigenous languages and nations at <http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map/>
- The language in *Do Not Go Around the Edges* aims to challenge conventional usage to provide new vehicles for cultural expression. Clare Bradford writes that *Do Not Go Around the Edges*, in "it's multiplicity of narratives and system of meaning destabilizes the domination of British culture and standard English, forcing readers into new modes of reading" (p68 *Unsettling Narratives*).
- Find out more about the Wandjina that are depicted in the text in the book *Yorro Yorro* by Magabala Books. <https://www.magabala.com/yorro-yorro.html>

CLASSROOM IDEAS

- Daisy Utemorrah is a Wunambal woman. Take note of the country from which she originates on the opening pages of *Do Not Go around the Edges*.
- On the first page opening, take time to examine the way in which the text is structured. Read the poem and the autobiography. View the illustration. Discuss that *Do Not Go Around the Edges* is told via these three dimensions. Read the rest of the text with this structure in mind.
- Discuss the importance of storytelling in Indigenous culture. In what ways is the written and visual text in *Do Not Go Around the Edges* part of this storytelling tradition?

- Stories are important to all cultures. What stories do your family tell and repeat? Are they written or oral? Does artwork help tell these stories? Why do we tell stories? Discuss.
- As you read Daisy's story, record your 'wonderings' as well as any words with which you are unfamiliar. Compile a word/'wonderings' wall that you work through as a class.
- Share how you personally link ideas from the autobiography with those found in the poem and illustration on each page. Is it easier for you to read the poem or the autobiography first? Why? How do these three elements work together to create a whole?
- What does the title of the book mean? Where are the 'edges' and why is it important not to 'slip'? (For example, does the title suggest that we should not be afraid of venturing within rather than staying remote and detached? Does it refer to sticking to the edges of Australia's coastline without ever venturing into its centre?)
- What do you think is the author's purpose in creating this text?
- Many of the author's memories are of a life experienced over a period when colonial practices and policies impacted on Aboriginal cultures in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. With older students, investigate this period in Australian history and the effects these decisions had on Indigenous culture and histories.
- The design of *Do Not Go Around the Edges* is seemingly simple, however upon review, it is both 'coherent and complex'. Discuss this statement.
- Parts of the Dreaming are shared through *Do Not Go Around the Edges*, including stories of creation and sacred spirits of the Wunambal people. Discuss these stories and compare them with other stories of creation from different cultures.
- Discuss the manner in which Aboriginal culture has evolved by coming into contact with non-Indigenous culture as seen in the text, for example, Christianity. Use examples from the text to verify your ideas.
- Daisy Utemorrhah had to leave her home and family to attend school. What was her reaction to this, both in the short and longer terms?
- How is the lost dog in the poem 'Burun Burun the Kingfisher' like Daisy?
- How would you describe the relationship between Daisy and her mother? Use clues from the illustrations and written text to support your ideas.
- Discuss the importance of family in Aboriginal culture. How is family structure different to your own family's structure? Represent this comparison in a graphic organiser.
- Discuss the poem 'Bind With the White Man's Law' which feels like a conversation between Mother Earth and the author. How does it reflect the autobiography at the bottom of the page?
- In your own words, explain the Wandjinas and their place in Wunambal culture.
- Select one of the stories such as 'Willie Wagtail About the Tribal War', 'Burun Burun the Kingfisher', 'A Cricket', 'Cat' or 'A Dog's Tale'. How do such stories offer non-Indigenous people insight into Indigenous culture? Rewrite one of these as a short story.

- Which is your favourite illustration and why? How does it reflect the story on that page opening?
- Recreate one of the illustrations from *Do Not Go Around the Edges* using Pat Torres' style. Display these in the classroom.
- Share your own life story by interweaving poems, prose and illustrations.
- Write a poem to share a story from your own experiences.
- What comment is the author making about non-Aboriginal Australia's treatment of the continent's First Nations? Use examples to help explain your viewpoint.
- Select poems from the text to analyse in small groups, discussing the poetic devices and language features used.

Appendix – Links to the Australian Curriculum

Cross-Curriculum Priorities Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture				
<p>Across the Australian Curriculum, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures priority provides opportunities for all learners to deepen their knowledge of Australia by engaging with the world’s oldest continuous living cultures. Students will understand that contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities are strong, resilient, rich and diverse.</p> <p>The Australian Curriculum: English values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and perspectives. It articulates relevant aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, literatures and literacies.</p> <p>All students will develop an awareness and appreciation of, and respect for the literature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples including storytelling traditions (oral narrative) as well as contemporary literature.</p>				
Year Level	English – Language	English – Literature	English - Literacy	History
4		Discuss how authors and illustrators make stories exciting, moving and absorbing and hold readers’ interest by using various techniques, for example character development and plot tension (ACELT1605)	Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning to expand content knowledge, integrating and linking ideas and analysing and evaluating texts (ACELY1692)	The nature of contact between Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders Peoples and others, for example, the Macassans and the Europeans, and the effects of these interactions on, for example families and the environment (ACHHK080)
5	Understand how to move beyond making bare assertions and take account of differing perspectives and points of view (ACELA1502) Understand how texts vary in purpose, structure and topic as well as the degree of formality (ACELA1504)	Identify aspects of literary texts that convey details or information about particular social, cultural and historical contexts (ACELT1608) Create literary texts that experiment with structures, ideas and stylistic features of selected authors (ACELT1798) Use metalanguage to describe the effects of ideas, text structures and language features on particular audiences (ACELT1795) Create literary texts that experiment with structures, ideas and stylistic features of selected authors (ACELT1798)	Identify and explain characteristic text structures and language features used in imaginative, informative and persuasive texts to meet the purpose of the text (ACELY1701)	The nature of convict or colonial presence, including the factors that influenced patterns of development, aspects of the daily life of the inhabitants (including Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples) and how the environment changed. (ACHHK094)
6	Understand how authors often innovate on text structures and play with language features to achieve particular aesthetic , humorous and	Make connections between students’ own experiences and those of characters and events represented in texts drawn from	Participate in and contribute to discussions, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, sharing and	

	persuasive purposes and effects (ACELA1518)	different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1613) Create literary texts that adapt or combine aspects of texts students have experienced in innovative ways (ACELT1618) Experiment with text structures and language features and their effects in creating literary texts, for example, using imagery, sentence variation, metaphor and word choice (ACELT1800)	evaluating information, experiences and opinions (ACELY1709) Analyse how text structures and language features work together to meet the purpose of a text (ACELY1711) Use comprehension strategies to interpret and analyse information and ideas, comparing content from a variety of textual sources including media and digital texts (ACELY1713)
7		Compare the ways that language and images are used to create character, and to influence emotions and opinions in different types of texts (ACELT1621) Discuss aspects of texts, for example their aesthetic and social value, using relevant and appropriate metalanguage (ACELT1803) Understand, interpret and discuss how language is compressed to produce a dramatic effect in film or drama, and to create layers of meaning in poetry, for example haiku, tankas, couplets, free verse and verse novels (ACELT1623)	Compare the text structures and language features of multimodal texts, explaining how they combine to influence audiences (ACELY1724)
8	Investigate how visual and multimodal texts allude to or draw on other texts or images to enhance and layer meaning (ACELA1548)	Explore the interconnectedness of Country and Place, People, Identity and Culture in texts including those by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors (ACELT1806)	Experiment with text structures and language features to refine and clarify ideas to improve the effectiveness of students' own texts (ACELY1810)