



Teacher Notes

Kookoo Kookaburra

written and illustrated by Gregg Dreise

Teacher Notes prepared by Christina Wheeler
in context with the Australian Curriculum.

OVERVIEW

Kookoo is well-known and liked for his ability to tell funny stories about his friends without being unkind. But when no one does anything silly for a while, Kookoo starts teasing them instead.

In a story about friendship, humility and forgiveness, Kookoo eventually learns that kindness is like a boomerang - if you throw it often, it comes back often.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

THEMES

Friendship

- Kookoo is well-liked until he starts teasing his friends
- Friendship involves treating others with respect

Loneliness

- Kookoo becomes lonely when his friends abandon him

Kindness

- Kindness is something that returns when you offer it to others

Humility

- Kookoo learns an important lesson about the virtues of humility

Forgiveness

- The other animals forgive Kookoo, even though he has mistreated them

Aboriginal Culture

- *Kookoo the Kookaburra* is a story of the Dreamtime
- Storytelling is an integral part of Aboriginal culture
- Elders share their wisdom

WRITING STYLE

Kookoo the Kookaburra is written in third person, past tense. It is suitable for early childhood and younger readers. With its discussion of important values such as kindness, friendship and forgiveness, it is a valuable teaching tool, being easily accessible and sharing a clear message.

CLASSROOM IDEAS

- Kookoo has a way of turning someone's silliness into a funny story without being unkind. Discuss this skill. Why is it important not to be nasty about other people's mistakes?
- Why does Kookoo's teasing cause the other animals to 'sink'? Have you ever felt like this because someone teased you? Write a reflection of a time that you felt like sinking.
- The illustrations in *Kookoo the Kookaburra* show more of the storyline than the written text alone. Examine the illustrations carefully and discuss how they add to the narrative.
- Investigate Aboriginal art, including dot painting and the way in which the pictures tell a story. Experiment with this artistic style by creating your own pictures suitable for inclusion in *Kookoo the Kookaburra*.
- The author uses figurative language in *Kookoo the Kookaburra*, for example, 'Creatures who had once gathered like twinkling stars now looked as if the clouds had dragged their sorrows over the sky.' Discuss the way in which language like this adds to the text.
- Why doesn't Kookoo listen to his uncle's advice at first?
- Discuss Uncle Googaguga's advice: 'You have two eyes, you have two ears, you only have one mouth. Look and listen twice as much as you speak.' How can you apply this philosophy to your own life?
- What is the difference between 'laughing at' and 'laughing with' someone? Use Kookoo as an example to help with this discussion.
- Share an example of a time that you saw kindness 'return like a boomerang'.
- Kookoo has a lot of endearing qualities that become overshadowed by some mistakes he makes. Discuss his attributes. What does he still need to work on?
- How important are elders in Aboriginal culture? What role does Uncle Googaguga play in Kookoo's life? Who is someone you listen to and respect? Discuss.
- Create a poster or play to promote the main theme of the story: 'Kindness is like a boomerang - if you throw it often, it comes back often.'
- Why does Kookoo show off? What could he do instead?
- Kookoo is a good storyteller. Try telling your own stories, sharing with a friend. What makes a good story? What helps make the telling of a story more interesting?
- Why did the author choose a kookaburra as the animal for this story? Link the themes of the book with this discussion.
- As a class, dramatise *Kookoo the Kookaburra*. Perform to another class.
- View footage of kookaburras on YouTube. Find out more about them by reading non-fiction texts. Create an information report sharing your knowledge.
- Create your own Dreamtime story about how the kookaburra got its laugh. View footage of a Kookaburra laughing <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0ZbykXlg6Q>
- Research boomerangs and the role they play in Aboriginal culture. Make your own boomerangs, or decorate ones that have been pre-

made. On the school oval, try throwing your boomerangs so that they return. You can view instructions for throwing a boomerang on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkv0frB5uwo> .