

Magabala Books • Teacher Notes

Clever Crow

Written by Nina Lawrence

Illustrated by Bronwyn Bancroft

Teacher Notes prepared by Christina Wheeler

OVERVIEW

Clever Crow is an endearing and witty tale that follows the exploits of a hungry and very clever crow. Crow searches in the bush for food but he can find none. It is only when he comes across people preparing for a ceremony that his luck changes. Crow spots a big turtle egg waiting to be cooked, and he cries out, 'Yummy, food for me!' But it is not an easy task stealing a turtle egg – even for a clever crow. Crow has to be more clever than he has ever been before! Children will love Bronwyn Bancroft's distinctive illustrations, and how the Djambarrpuyŋu language translation – Yolŋu language from North East Arnhem Land – is woven into the design.

- Entertaining tale aimed at educating young readers to care for the environment
- Introduces native animals and shows how they are directly affected by rubbish in their habitat

THEMES

- Aboriginal Peoples – Social Life and Customs
- Djambarrpuyŋu (Yolŋu Aboriginal language)
- Art, Aboriginal
- Perspective
- Persistence

AUDIENCE AND WRITING STYLE

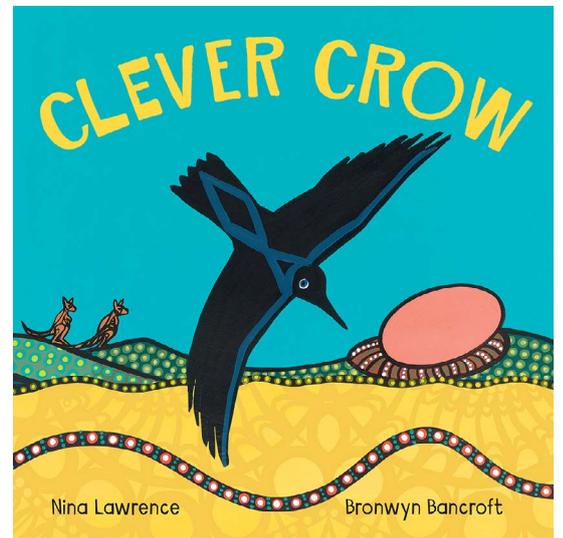
Clever Crow is a bilingual text written in English and Djambarrpuyŋu. It shares the tale of a hungry crow who uses his cunning and wit to steal a turtle egg not once, but twice. Illustrated by Bronwyn Bancroft, the text is a visual delight, complementing the written text beautifully. It is suitable for independent readers and as a read-aloud for early childhood audiences. By incorporating native animals, Australian landscapes and Indigenous customs and beliefs, *Clever Crow* shares Aboriginal culture in an accessible and vital way.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR



Nina Lawrence is a descendant of the Gimuy Walubara Yidinji mob and was born on Yidinji country in Far North Queensland. Nina is interested in the preservation and promotion of Indigenous Australian languages, and is passionate about access to bilingual development and literacy. *Clever Crow* was inspired by her work in the Northern Territory where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional hunting methods are still used. This is her first children's book.

Bronwyn Bancroft is a Djanbun clan member of the Bundjalung Nation. She illustrated her first book in 1992 and has worked on nearly 40 children's books. She was the Australian finalist for the Ezra Jack Keats Award for Excellence in Children's Book Illustration (1994), received the Dromkeen Medal (2010), and was the Australian finalist for the Hans Christian Andersen Award (Illustrator 2016). Bronwyn has a Diploma of Visual Arts and two Masters degrees from the University of Sydney (Studio Practice and Visual Art).



LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

This book and the classroom activities provided are primarily relevant to the following areas of the Australian Curriculum:

Learning area	Year level
English	Years F-3
The Arts	Years F-4

The appendix highlights relevant content descriptions, cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities that relate to the text and classroom ideas provided.

CLASSROOM IDEAS

English

- The cover page features the silhouette of the crow alongside an egg-shaped oval. After reading the text, discuss the relationship between the story and this illustration.
- Map the plot of *Clever Crow* on a story graph. Label the main components of the narrative such as the complication, climax and resolution. How is tension or excitement added to the narrative structure?
- The young men in the book are attending a ceremony. Find out more about the role of ceremonies in Aboriginal culture.
- Why are turtle eggs considered such a delicacy? What can we learn about Aboriginal culture from *Clever Crow*?
- Why does the kookaburra laugh when he sees the crow with the turtle egg? Does it surprise you that he laughs rather than scolds? What does this tell us about the story and its purpose?
- Why does the egg fall out of the wallaby's pouch rather than begin given back to the crow or straight to the old man? How does this fact help us to view this story from the crow's point of view, rather than the humans'?
- How does the old man fishing in his canoe reflect Aboriginal beliefs about sustainability and respect for the environment?
- Why does the old man choose to give the egg away rather than keep it for himself? What does this tell us about his wisdom?
- *Clever Crow* features the interconnectedness between humans, creatures and country. How is this reflected in the storyline and illustrations?
- What do you think is the main purpose or message of *Clever Crow*?
- It is natural upon first reading this story to see the crow as pesky, however, when seeing it from a less 'human' point of view – especially from the crow's perspective – it becomes a story about respect, resourcefulness and the importance of sharing with nature rather than taking from it. Discuss your initial responses to the text, compared with those after more careful consideration of what the author and illustrator are saying through this text. How important is perspective to narratives?
- The river is important to this story. Why is this the case? How do the illustrations convey this?
- In pairs, retell *Clever Crow* in your own words.
- Re-write this story from the crow's point of view.
- Write and illustrate another page to follow on from the end of the current story. How do you think the humans would react after losing the egg for the second time? What clues do we get of this reaction from other pages in the book?
- *Clever Crow* includes the Djambarrpuyŋu language translation. Why is it important that children in Aboriginal communities have access to books written in their first language? For more information, see the Indigenous Literacy Foundation's website, in particular, their Book Buzz program: <https://www.indigenouliteracyfoundation.org.au/book-buzz>
- Compare *Clever Crow* with *My Home in Kakadu* by Jane Christopherson and Christine Christopherson. How are these texts similar and different from one another?
- With a friend, devise your own story about another hungry, native animal. Plan, write and illustrate this story together.



The Arts

- Why are the first two-page openings in black and white, except for the markings on the crow's body? How does this help the reader to understand that this story is about the crow, rather than about humans? Why are the pages coloured once he spots the turtle egg?
- How do the illustrations help tell the story of *Clever Crow*? Which is your favourite illustration? Why?
- Examine the artistic style of Bronwyn Bancroft's artwork in *Clever Crow*. How would you describe her style? Why is it so effective?
- Discuss the illustrator's use of circles in her illustrations. How do these circles represent the circle of life and the circular nature of this story?
- Discuss Bronwyn Bancroft's use of colour and shape. How has she represented the sun and camp fire (see third page opening)?
- For teachers and older students, view the following interview with Bronwyn Bancroft to learn more about her style and beliefs: http://education.abc.net.au/home?WT.tsrc=Email&WT.mc_id=Innovation_Innovation-Splash%7CSecondary_email%7C20160420#!/media/1912990/bronwyn-bancroft



APPENDIX - LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

Year	Curriculum Area
F	English Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share feelings and thoughts about the events and characters in texts (ACELT1783)• Retell familiar literary texts through performance, use of illustrations and images (ACELT1580)
1	English Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss features of plot, character and setting in different types of literature and explore some features of characters in different texts (ACELT1584)
2	English Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss how depictions of characters in print, sound and images reflect the contexts in which they were created (ACELT1587)
3	English Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create imaginative texts based on characters, settings and events from students' own and other cultures using visual features, for example perspective, distance and angle (ACELT1601)
F-2	The Arts Visual Art <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use and experiment with different materials, techniques, technologies and processes to make artworks (ACAVAM107)• Create and display artworks to communicate ideas to an audience (ACAVAM108)
3-4	The Arts Visual Art <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore ideas and artworks from different cultures and times, including artwork by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to use as inspiration for their own representations (ACAVAM110)
Cross-Curriculum Priorities Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Culture	

