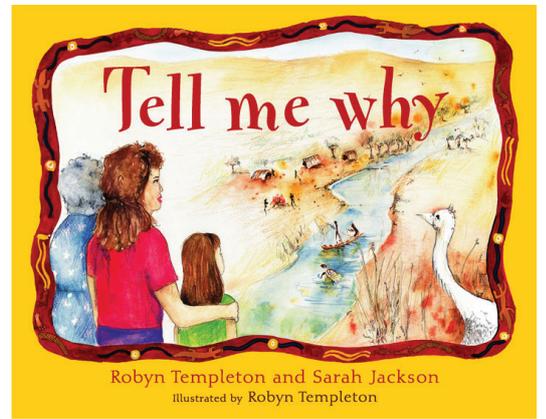


Magabala Books • Teacher Notes

Tell Me Why

Written by Robyn Templeton and Sarah Jackson; illustrated by Robyn Templeton



Teacher Notes prepared by Christina Wheeler

OVERVIEW

Written by mother and daughter duo, Robyn Templeton and Sarah Jackson, *Tell Me Why* is a picture book that encourages children to ask questions about their heritage and respect different cultures. This is Sarah Jackson's story, but it is also the story of so many others dealing with society's preconceived ideas about Aboriginality and using skin colour to determine identity.

At seven years of age, Sarah knows she's Aboriginal but questions her pale skin colour. Sarah's quest for answers leads her back to her great-grandmother. Together with Sarah's grandmother, they sit down and share their family stories, which helps Sarah to understand how family history contributes to who you are.

THEMES

- Indigenous Culture
- Identity
- Family
- Stolen Generation
- Racism
- Differences
- Belonging
- Respect

AUDIENCE AND WRITING STYLE

Tell Me Why shares author Sarah Jackson's journey of self-discovery as she connects with her Aboriginal heritage. After hearing stories from her grandmother and great-grandmother, she is able to better identify with her culture and learn of the many challenges faced by Aboriginal people after white settlement. The text incorporates the Stolen Generation in a way that is relatable to younger audiences. It also explores the narrator's own understanding of her Aboriginality. As such, it is best suited to Middle-Upper Primary audiences.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Robyn Templeton is a Yamatji woman from Perth. She wrote *Tell Me Why* with Sarah in response to her daughter's questions and personal journey. She recalls feeling the same way and hopes that their book will help other children, or adults in the same position. Robyn illustrated *Tell Me Why* and has had many public exhibitions of her artwork.

Sarah Jackson wrote *Tell Me Why* with her mother and is determined to see it help other children with a similar story.

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 4-6
Humanities and Social Sciences	Years 4-6

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



CLASSROOM IDEAS

English and Humanities and Social Sciences (History)

- The author begins the text by sharing information about her family and home life. How does this help the reader to relate to Sarah? Why does the text start in this way before investigating more serious issues?
- Sarah notices the many differences between her and her friends. She also notices that while she is fair-skinned with freckles and red hair, her grandmothers have brown skin. Discuss the themes of acceptance, differences and identity that underpin *Tell Me Why*.
- Why does Grandma Doris say to Sarah that 'it is important that we all know where we come from and who we are as people'? Conduct research into your own family heritage. Interview your parents and grandparents, creating a family tree to help trace your background.
- Grandma Doris explains to Sarah that 'our stories need to be passed on'. What stories does she share with Sarah? Why is it important that these stories be passed on? What stories have been passed on in your family? How have these helped to shape your identity and sense of belonging within your family unit?
- Look carefully at the page opening in which Sarah, Nana Mac and Grandma Doris remember how life was for Aboriginal people before white people came to Australia. How was life different during that time? How did contact with white people change life for Aboriginal people. Give examples from the text to support your ideas.
- Rosie was part of the Stolen Generation. Use Trina Saffioti's picture book *Stolen Girl* to introduce younger students to this element of Australian history. Discuss how this affected the lives of those who were taken from their families? Likewise, how would this have affected the parents of those taken?
- Watch Kevin Rudd's apology speech. Why was the Prime Minister's apology such an important step towards reconciliation?
- Why is it important to acknowledge the shame and racism that resulted from previous government policies? How do texts like *Tell Me Why* help younger readers to empathise with people like Grandma Doris and Rosie? Find out more about the reconciliation process at the following website <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/>
- How does sharing stories help healing to begin? Reflect on a time when sharing something actually helped you to heal?
- Why is it essential that we accept one another's differences? How are differences a positive aspect of modern society?
- Describe the relationship that Sarah has with her grandmother and great-grandmother? Write a reflection that shares the relationship that you have with your grandparents. How have they helped you? What are your favourite memories of them?
- How important is the theme of family in *Tell Me Why*?
- Research more about the way in which Aboriginal people lived prior to 1788. Investigate their way of life, how their communities were organised and how they looked after their country. Present your findings to your class.
- Why does Grandma Doris tell Sarah about her mother, Rosie? How do the illustrations on these pages help convey the emotions around the Stolen Generation? Why was this hard for Sarah to learn about? Why do you think she had learnt of it previously?
- How did Rosie change after being removed from her family?
- How important is it that we are curious about our background? In what ways does *Tell Me Why* encourage us to ask questions?
- In the role of Sarah, write a recount about your visit to see Grandma Doris.
- After reading *Tell Me Why*, discuss the illustrations on the end covers and the frame around the picture of Sarah. How do these illustrations show a visual representation of Sarah's identity?
- Draw a self-portrait that is framed with objects that reflect your identity. Display these around the classroom. Share with a friend how each object represents something about you.



APPENDIX - LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

Year	Curriculum Area				
4	<p>English</p> <p>Literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create literary texts that explore students' own experiences and imagining (ACELT1607) • Make connections between the ways different authors may represent similar storylines, ideas and relationships (ACELT1602) 				
	<p>Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS)</p> <p>History</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature of contact between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and others, for example, the Macassans and the Europeans, and the effects of these interactions on, for example, people and environments (ACHASSK086) 				
5	<p>English</p> <p>Literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify aspects of literary texts that convey details or information about particular social, cultural and historical contexts (ACELT1608) • Recognise that ideas in literary texts can be conveyed from different viewpoints, which can lead to different kinds of interpretations and responses (ACELT1610) 				
	<p>Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS)</p> <p>History</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 (ACHASSK107) 				
6	<p>English</p> <p>Literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make connections between students' own experiences and those of characters and events represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1613) • Analyse and evaluate similarities and differences in texts on similar topics, themes or plots (ACELT1614) 				
	<p>Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS)</p> <p>History</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences of Australian democracy and citizenship, including the status and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, migrants, women and children (ACHASSK135) 				
<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 50%;">Cross-Curriculum Priorities</th> <th style="width: 50%;">General Capabilities</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture</td> <td>Intercultural Understanding; Literacy</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Cross-Curriculum Priorities	General Capabilities	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture	Intercultural Understanding; Literacy
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