Wylah the Koorie Warrior #2: Custodians

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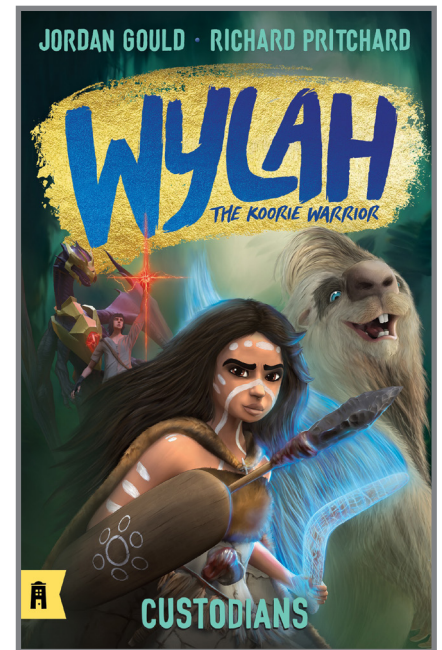
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SYNOPSIS

Wylah has already accomplished the unbelievable feat of uniting the five Guardians, but her journey is far from over. Together with her megafauna friends, she must travel through the treacherous and forbidden Valley of the Spirits to face off against the Dragon Army.

Can Wylah defeat the perils that lay ahead and become the ultimate Koorie Warrior?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jordan Gould is a Peek Whurrong man from Warrnambool, Victoria. He performs Welcome to Country ceremonies at corporate and private gatherings. He is passionate about teaching and talking to groups about culture, language and reconciliation.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Richard Pritchard—a New Zealand-born Samoan man—has had a dream of writing books since he was a teenager. His passion for visual storytelling has led him to work in graphic design, film, animation, commercials and video games.

STUDY NOTES
BEFORE READING

The word Koorie in the title signals a regional identity. According to the AIATSIS website:
'Some Aboriginal people prefer to be referred to by their regional identity, such as Koori, Murri, Nunga or others. These names "place" them as coming from specific geographical regions, similar to saying you're a "Queenslander" or "Tasmanian". These regional identities do not necessarily adhere to Australia's state or territory boundaries.'

- Examine the book's cover carefully, including its images, colours, font, text and framing. Using these as clues, see if you can answer the following questions:
  - Where might this story be set?
  - How would you describe the girl, Wylah (pronounced Wheel-la)?
  - Why might she be described as a Koorie Warrior?
  - What sort of a story do you expect this will be? Choose one or more words to describe the genre of the story you think you are about to read.
- The authors have included a Welcome to Country on the page featuring the 40,000-year-old map of Australia. What is the significance of a Welcome to Country? Where else might you expect to be welcomed to Country.

WHILE READING

- Can you see anything different about the map of Australia at the opening of the story? (Hint: Papua New Guinea and Tasmania are attached to Australia.)

Comprehension

- Where do the Guardians return to when they are not helping Wylah and her friends?
- Why does Merri burst into tears when she asks about Wylah's Grandmother?
- What are Wylah's special weapons?
- What special qualities does Wylah's cloak have?
- What substance does Wylah and her group go in search of to save her people?
- A wuurn is a home in Wylah's Peek Whurrong language. True or False?
- What is the name of Alinta's rescue friend and what does its name mean in English?
- Why is Alinta angry with Wylah and her friends
- What is Alinta's challenge?
- Pippy believes it is his duty to accept Alinta's challenge. True or False?
- How do Alinta and Yapptarra 'cheat' during the race?
- According to Alinta, what is the trick to throwing a boomerang correctly?
- Who is Alinta waiting on to return from the Valley?
- Why doesn't Alinta want to join Wylah and her friends?
- What task does Wylah give to Marntaro and Kinpa?

AFTER READING

- Wylah's Guardians are larger (or are likely to grow larger) than their modern cousins. Visit the Australian Museum's website to research megafauna to answer the following questions:
  - What does the term megafauna mean?
  - Name three different types of megafauna that once roamed Australia.
  - When did they live in Australia?
  - Why did megafauna become extinct?
- Wylah's quest involves leading five Guardians to save her tribe. Make a list of each Guardian's name, the Totem in which it resides, and the animal it manifests itself to be when called upon to protect its people. If you had to choose between one to protect your family, which would you choose and why?
- Research drop bears, on the Australian Museum's website and answer the following questions:
  - Are they or have they ever been a real creature?
  - According to the Australian Museum, how do drop bears attack their prey?
  - What are some of the folk remedies for protecting yourself from drop bears?
  - Do you trust the information on this page or do you think the Australian Museum might have another reason to display it?
- 'I laugh. "There is food everywhere, Jayden. Honey, berries, apples, sweet nectar, eels, fish and water. Country gives us everything, and the Elders know exactly when to harvest each food."' (p 133) Bush Tucker is the term used to describe foods that are native to Australia and consumed by First Nations people. Research three types of Bush Tucker and create a poster that includes the following:
  - a description of each food or drink
  - a map of Australia showing where each is found
  - illustrations or photos of each type
  - simple recipes for their use.
- 'Ochre is of more value than gold to us. It is sacred. My people travel vast distances to trade many different types of ochre.' (p 228) Invite a local Elder to your school to demonstrate the traditional method of grinding ochre and talk about its importance in First Nations Culture.
- Does this story remind you of anything you've seen on a screen or read in a book before? Have you heard of a theory

called the Monomyth (or Hero's Journey)? It says that many stories from around the world fit one simple pattern: a hero is forced out of their normal world to go on a quest, encountering fabulous forces along the way until they win a decisive victory. They then return to their world with new powers or wealth. The films in the Stars Wars series, for instance, fit this pattern. Compare and contrast Wylah with another hero of your choice, making sure you find the things she has in common with the other hero, including challenges they both need to overcome, and any differences.

AUTHOR OF NOTES
CAROLYN WALSH