

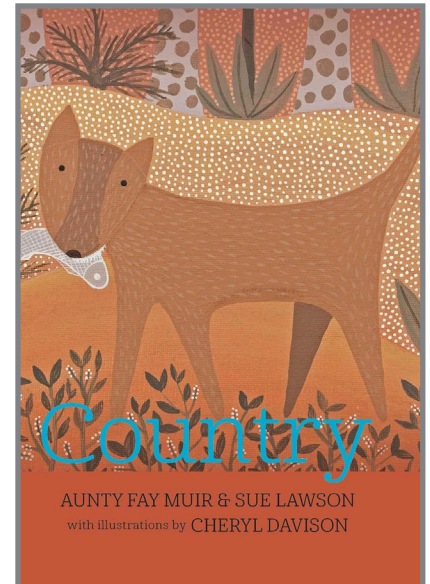
Country

AUTHORS

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ILLUSTRATOR

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SYNOPSIS

Country introduces young people to the complexity and beauty of Country in First Nations culture. It starts with the complex aspects of Country, including past, present and future, to the requirements Country has of each of us.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Aunty Fay Stewart Muir, AO is a senior Boon Wurrung and Wamba Wamba Elder, First Nations' community leader and Koori Court Elder. She is a Boon Wurrung and Wemba Wemba Language Specialist and provides cultural guidance to students and teachers at all levels of the Victorian Education system. Aunty Fay is on the Victorian Honour Roll of Women and the Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll.

Sue Lawson writes books for children and young adults. Her books include *You Matter – Be Your Own Best Friend*, *Peregrines in the City*, *What's The Big Idea?* and *An Important Message From Mr Beaky*.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Cheryl Davison is a Walbunja, Ngarigo woman. Cheryl on the Gulaga National Park Board of Management that governs the direction of care for the Yuin people's beloved and sacred mountain.

WRITING STYLE

Country is written in simple, direct language. The style, though simple, conveys the richness and complexity of Country. The sparse language leaves room for the reader to elaborate and explore all that Country entails. The text is suitable to be read to young children or by emerging and established readers.

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- As a class, brainstorm words for Country. Ask students what Country means to them. Use the words to create a Word Cloud. Use the following website as a resource <https://www.wordclouds.com/>.
 - After reading *Country*, revisit the word cloud to see if the class would like to add words. Perhaps create a new word cloud with words from the book.
- Examine the cover:
 - What clues does it give about the genre?
 - What might the book be about?

- Discuss the clues about the book. Ask students to share their reasoning.
- Is this a picture book or a non-fiction book?
- Where might students find this book in the library?
- Help students identify the title of the book, author, illustrator and publisher.
 - Discuss each person's role in creating a book.
 - Which of these roles would students prefer if they were to help create a book?
- Discuss the book's title: *Country*, then answer the following questions:
 - What clues does it offer readers?
 - What questions does the title prompt?
 - What do you know about Country?
 - Are there different interpretations of the word Country?
- Read the blurb: 'The wonder of Country guides us to culture, to story, to how to be.'
 - What clues does it provide about the book?
 - On a large sheet of paper, create a table with the headings: 'What we know about Country' and 'What we want to know about Country'. Revisit the poster after reading.
- Take some guesses about how Country might 'guide' us.
 - Revisit these guesses after reading the book to see whether anyone was right.

AFTER READING

- Were all the questions answered in the Before Reading activities?
 - Allocate unanswered questions to pairs to research.
- After reading *Country* have students turn and talk to the person beside them to discuss what they found interesting about the book.
 - Did they learn anything new?
 - Did anything confuse them?
 - Did they have a favourite illustration?
 - What was the most interesting page?
- Break the class into groups. Allocate each group one of the following spreads in *Country*:
 - Country is the past, present, future.
 - Country is songs and stories, art and ceremony.
 - Country is earth and sky. Sun, moon and stars.
 - Country is waterholes, creeks and rivers.
 - Ocean and beaches.
 - Country is mountains and trees, rocks and grasses.
 - Country is all living creatures.
 - Animals, birds, and insects.
 - Reptiles and fish.
 - Country is all of us. Country is how we behave, how we care for each other.

Have each group discuss their spread and why/how Country can be all of these things. Older classes can expand this activity by choosing between a diorama, poster, written report or PowerPoint presentation to present their results. Presentations can be shared in class.

- Australia is comprised of different First Nations' groups. Each of these groups has their own culture, customs, law and language. Discuss the following as a class:
 - Do students know whose Country they live on?
 - Do they know whose Country their school is on?
 - What Country do they holiday on?
 - Where is Aunty Fay's Country?
 - Where is Cheryl Davison's Country?

Show the students the Country where your school is located on the following map <<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/>

map-indigenous-australia>.

- Take students outside with some pencils and paper, in a quiet spot, in nature. Ask students to spend 5 minutes looking around. Then, have students think about everything they see. As a class, discuss all things they saw. Write them all down and discuss any way these might be connected.
- Invite a local Elder to speak to the class. Before the visit, work with students to prepare questions. Ask students to word questions in a way that encourages detailed information from your guest. Discuss with students the importance of deep listening in First Nation culture, and what this might look like when listening to a guest.
- Older classes can write a report, after the visit, for the school newsletter or for display in class.
- Read the final spread of Country: 'When we care for Country, Country is strong and healthy. Then we are strong and healthy too.' Discuss with students the ways we can care for Country.
 - Visit the following resource: <<https://www.ilsc.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Caring-For-Country-Factsheet.pdf>>. As a class, come up with different ways we can care for Country every day. Create a poster of these ideas for display around the school.