

Come Together Again: A Celebration of First Nations Music, Song and Dance

AUTHOR

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ILLUSTRATOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Primary



SYNOPSIS

Come Together Again explores First Nations culture through a celebration of music, song and dance.

Music, song and dance brings people together, creating connections. For First Nations People, it is the heart of culture and community, holding knowledge, stories and tradition. For Isaiah, music is a huge part of who he is and in this book he shares his passion.

Come Together Again teaches young readers about the integral role music and performance have played in 65,000+ years of First Nations history and culture. Learn about the yidaki (didgeridoo) and how it makes its sounds or how leaves can whistle. Be introduced to First Nations singers in pop, country and opera genres. Discover dancers in the styles of contemporary, ballet and hip-hop.

Collaborating once again with Mununjali and Fijian artist Jaelyn Biumaiwai, Isaiah takes us on a musical learning journey through ceremonial history, instrument creation, and cultural beliefs and practices.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Australian pop artist Isaiah Firebrace is a proud Yorta Yorta and Gunditjmara man who grew up on the banks of the Murray River. After a childhood of hardship faced by so many in the Aboriginal community, Isaiah's life changed completely after winning The X Factor in 2016 on his 17th birthday. With a multi-platinum single under his belt, Isaiah has represented Australia at Eurovision and is a regular across Australian television. His commitment to mentoring and changing the lives of First Nations youth has seen him tour all corners of the country speaking to young people and offering his personal story of hope and inspiration. His new children's book represents the next chapter in his already remarkable story.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Jaelyn Biumaiwai is a self-taught illustrator. She is of Mununjali and Fijian ancestry and creates on Kombumerri Country, Gold Coast (the lands of the Yugambah speaking people). She has a passion for First Nations and Pasifika culture and communities, and this is reflected in the work she does. Her first book as a published illustrator, *Heroes, Rebels and Innovators* by Karen Wyld, was the 2022 CBCA Book of the Year Awards—Eve Pownall Award Honour book. Also illustrated by Jaelyn, *Come Together* by Isaiah Firebrace was shortlisted for Social Impact Book of the Year in the Australian Book Industry Awards (ABIA) and was the 2023 CBCA Book of the Year Awards—Eve Pownall Award Honour book.

THEMES

- Storytelling through music, song and dance
- Culture
- First Nations Performers

STUDY NOTES**BEFORE READING**

- Who are the First Peoples of Australia?
- What do you already know about the First Peoples of Australia?
- What do you know about the author of this book—Isaiah Firebrace?
- Do you know definitions of the following First Nations terms?
 - Ceremony
 - Ancestors
 - The Dreaming
 - Country
 - Mob.

Research any words you are unfamiliar with.

WHILE READING

- Use the AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia to identify where all First Nations groups, mentioned in the text, are located in Australia—starting with Isaiah’s mobs (Yorta Yorta and Gunditjimarra).

AFTER READING

- When did Isaiah Firebrace first start singing?
- Who is allowed to play the yidaki (didjeridoo)?
- What Torres Strait Islander language is the song ‘Taba Naba’ sung in and what is the song about?
- How many First Nations performers are mentioned throughout the book?
- How do First Nations people pass down important cultural stories and knowledge to younger generations?
- Have you ever experienced a Welcome to Country shared by a First Nations Elder? If so, can you explain what it was about and describe what happened?
 - Isaiah writes about ceremony, particularly Welcome to Country and smoking ceremonies (p 4). Has anyone ever experienced an Aboriginal Elder Welcome to Country (not to be confused with an Acknowledgement of Country)?
 - Watch the ‘Welcome to Country’ by Simon Forrest <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNYjKxKMpV4>>. What was Simon wearing? Where was he sitting? What Nation/Country is Simon from? What was creating smoke in the coolamon (wooden dish)? Learn about the tradition of Welcome to Country, ie. how it has been adapted over time, what the purpose is and who can perform a Welcome to Country?
- Establish a Yarning Circle by sitting together in a large circle where everyone can see and hear each other. Begin a class discussion about how First Nations People communicate cultural knowledge, skills and stories through music, song and dance. Ask students if they can think of any other ways First Nations People share knowledge (eg. through art, or yarns around the campfire).
- As a class, collaborate to create a set of educational flashcards based on the book. In pairs, provide students with one of the following key words:
 - Ceremony
 - Yidaki
 - Bilma
 - Bullroarer
 - Leaf whistling
 - Ancestors
 - Mob
 - Welcome to Country

- Creation stories
- Song
- Uncle Archie Roach
- Jessica Mauboy
- Troy Cassar-Daley
- Aunty Deborah Cheetham Fraillon
- Bangarra Dance Theatre
- Ghenoa Gela
- Chistine Anu
- Dhari
- Warup
- Kulap.

Support each pair of students to create an A5 flashcard to explain/define the word they were given in a short sentence with a supporting visual. Combine the flashcards together to form a *Come Together Again* flashcard set.

- Support students to create a persuasive advertising flyer for a real life or imaginary gig (live performance by a musician or group). Encourage students to include necessary information (eg. what, when, where, etc.) so that the reader will arrive to the right venue at the right time for the event. Prompt students to consider ways they can make their flyer more enticing and also consider what might deter people from reading the advertisement (eg. too much text!).
- *Come Together Again* includes many different First Nations performers throughout the book. In pairs, research one First Nations performer and create an information report about the person either as a cardboard poster or digitally. Display posters in the classroom when complete.
- The Rainbow Serpent is a significant creation being in many different First Nations groups across the continent. On the west side of the country on Whadjuk Noongar boodja (land), people tell stories of the Rainbow Serpent (the Waakal/ Waugal), while in the middle and east side of the Country there are also stories of the same creature. With students, research different stories of the Rainbow Serpent and compare the similarities and differences between these stories.
- Watch the Play School episode 'Yarning and Dreaming' <<https://iview.abc.net.au/show/play-school-yarning-and-dreaming>> and see how Christine Anu and Miah Madden reuse plastic bottle lids to make a musical instrument like a kulap from the Torres Strait Islands.
 - Using available materials and resources in and outside of the classroom make a kulap, or invent a new musical instrument. Students can share how they made their instrument and what noise it makes to their peers. Play School has provided educator notes for the Play School episode here <<https://live-production.wcms.abc-cdn.net.au/3dc59812e3c8072539134036ca293618>>.
- Page 30 is about the many different local First Nations performers who might not be famous, but are equally as important. Research and invite a local First Nations dance group, singer, musician or band to perform at your school. Pay special attention to the cultural dress and instruments the performers incorporate. Are they traditional, contemporary or a blend of both? What stories or knowledge are they passing on in their dance, song or music? Discuss with students.
- Leaf-whistling is used by First Nations People to copy bird sounds while hunting and to call kids home. Explore Country to find suitable gum leaves that students can use to attempt leaf-whistling. It's not as easy as it looks! Read pp 13 and 14 very carefully to find out what to do. Try different ways to fold and hold the leaf. What sounds can you make? Take turns sharing as a class.
- On p 12 we learn about hand and body clapping. Isaiah writes, 'Tapping our chest, forearms or legs, or clapping our hands and stomping our feet, are all ways to add movement to a performance and to keep in rhythm and time'. Watch the YouTube 'I Just Can't Wait to Be King—The Lion King Body Percussion' by Music with Mrs Gibbs and have a go as a class.' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqof84_WR1s>. Can you keep up with the beat?
 - Listen to the song 'Ngaya Ngaba' sung on the Cheeky Tunes TV YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYW2MHmmp_0>. In pairs, or as a whole class, create a body percussion pattern for this song. You might like to draw the pattern on a whiteboard by using different symbols to represent each body movement (e.g.

an X represents a clap and an O represents a foot stomp in the pattern: X X O X).

- Isaiah said one of his favourite songs in Yorta Yorta language is 'Ngarra Burra Ferra'. Research the history of the song and discuss the journey of the song to Australia and particularly, why you think it was translated to Yorta Yorta language. Watch the 'Ngarra Burra Ferra/Sapphires Medley' from the 2015 Schools Spectacular <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lfnuUoRalo>>. How do the dancers tell the story of the song? Discuss as a class.
- As a class, plan a performance to showcase at a school assembly. You could include the musical instruments you made or the leaf whistling and body percussion you practised in previous activities. Consider all the elements that Isaiah considers when he performs live on stage—sound, lighting, props/design, audience seating, promotional materials, ticket sales, etc. Delegate jobs among classmates and invite parents, carers, family and friends to watch the performance.

AUTHOR OF NOTES

**JORDYN GREEN—WIRADJURI, NGEMBA
AND PAAKANTJI WOMAN AND OWNER OF
THE YULANG EFFECT**