

Our Dance

AUTHORS

JACINTA DANIHER AND TAYLOR HAMPTON

ILLUSTRATOR

JANELLE BURGER

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SYNOPSIS

*Under the moon, by the big gum tree,
let's dance and sing in the corroboree.*

*With ochre on our bodies, Our dance awaits,
Our mob, Our culture, let's celebrate.*

Join in the fun as we come together and dance in the corroboree! Learn how to slither like a snake, jump like a kangaroo, crawl like a goanna, run like an emu and fly like an eagle.

A joyful celebration of First Nations culture and Australia's unique animals through dance and music, with rhyming actions to get young readers moving and vibrant illustrations from Noongar illustrator Janelle Burger.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Taylor Hampton is a proud Ngayampaa/Wiradjuri man and Jacinta Daniher is an early childhood educator. Taylor and Jacinta have a passion for educating young people about Aboriginal culture. In 2019, they established Birrang Cultural Connections to offer cultural workshops in education settings, with the vision of creating content that is educational, interactive and exciting. They have two children, Ella and Arlo, who have inspired them to create picture books that reflect their culture and experiences as young Aboriginal children growing up in Australia today.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Janelle Burger is an Indigenous Australian (Noongar) and Italian illustrator based in Paris, France. Her work is influenced by pop culture, fashion, video games and food. She has worked for a variety of clients, including creating gift cards for Papyrus, fine art prints for Rosenstiels, online illustrations for Tamu McPherson's website All the Pretty Birds, and illustrating the book *Get Changed* by fashion stylist Kat Farmer. When she's not drawing, Janelle likes to ride her bike around Paris, taking photos of cats and old men wearing berets whilst holding a baguette in their hands.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

Cara Shipp is a Wiradjuri/Welsh woman (descending from the Lamb and Shipp families in Central Western NSW, around Dubbo, Parkes and Trangie) and was recently Head of Senior School at Silkwood School on the Gold Coast. As part of the Big Picture Learning Australia network of schools, Cara is now a National School Coach at Silkwood School and other

schools across SE QLD and Northern NSW, leading professional development for teachers in this network. Cara has previously run alternative educational programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, held Head Teacher English/HASS/Languages positions and served as President, Vice President and Editor with the ACT Association for the Teaching of English (ACTATE). She is currently the National Fellow with the Australian Association for the Teaching of English. Cara is an Alumnus and trained facilitator of the Stronger Smarter Leadership Program. Cara completed a Master of Education focusing on Aboriginal literacy and regularly presents cultural competence training at local and national conferences, particularly within the context of incorporating First Nations perspectives into the English curriculum. Her recent AATE publication, *Listening from the Heart: Re-writing the Teaching of English with First Nations Voices*, documents this work. Cara writes teachers notes for a range of First Nations authors and publishers, and she has a blog on Aboriginal perspectives in English teaching at <https://missshipp.wordpress.com/>.

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- Discuss the features of the book cover, front and back:
 - What do the tracks and coloured lines represent?
 - Is it night-time or daytime?
 - What are the children doing? What kind of dancing might they be doing?
 - What is on the children's faces? Lead into a discussion about ochre—what is it, and have they heard of it or experienced it before?

AFTER READING

English

- Discuss and identify the rhyming words in the text.
- Notice that a lot of the words in bold and large text are action words (verbs).
- Discuss some of the key repeated words: Our mob, Our culture, Our dance, proud and strong, pride, let's, join in, thanks for joining us. Notice how the language includes everyone and invites us all to join together and celebrate. Discuss how proud the children in the story are to share their culture. If appropriate, explore with your students what they would be proud to share about their family's traditions and cultures.
- Invite students to identify their favourite pages and why they like them.
- Discuss why it is important for First Nations people to have corroborees and gatherings where they dance and sing.
- Discuss why it is important or useful for First Nations children to learn how animals move. What can they learn from these dances?
- Introduce the concept of things that are the same and things that are different. Can students notice the different colours of the kangaroos on spread #8? Are they different types of kangaroos? How are they similar and different? What other animals do we know that have different fur colours?
- Continuing with similarities and differences, ask students to find who in the class has the same hair colour as them. Then have them move and stand together. Who in the class has brothers? (Stand together.) Who in the class has sisters? (Stand together.) Repeat and make up new categories to suit your class group.
- Ask students if they share any of the same qualities as any of the children in the story. Who likes to dance? Who is tall like some of the girls in the book? Who is short? Who likes to be around a campfire?
- Can you notice the different skin colours of the children in the story? Spread #7 shows their different hands as they make the snake actions. The other spreads show them dancing as a group. Discuss how the children in the story are like the kangaroos we noticed earlier—they might be different skin colours, but they are part of the same mob and they all live and dance and learn their culture together. Explain that this can happen in a family where the parents are from different places and different nations. Their children could have different skin colours, but they are still one family, and they belong to that culture and community.
- Display enlarged copies of the five sections of the book that depict the kangaroo, emu, snake, goanna or eagle dances. Practise, repeat and discuss the features of the rhymes for each animal.
- Brainstorm other Australian animals that are not in this book. Consider animals such as koalas, platypuses,

kookaburras, echidnas and turtles. Brainstorm some words and actions for each of these new animals. Invite students to work in small groups and make up their own rhyme/story about one of these new animals. It may help each group to use the enlarged copy of one of the animals from the book to spark their ideas for their own rhyme/story.

- Have students draw their new animal and, where appropriate, assist them to write their story or rhyme to go with the drawing.

Humanities and Social Sciences

- Discuss and have students draw the people in their family, where they were born and places they travel often, and how they are related to each other. Draw celebrations and special events that they share with their family. You may like to pre-empt and support this by inviting families to send in some annotated photos that would help their student with the task. This also connects with Foundation Health and PE (investigate who they are and the people in their world).
- Invite students to talk about their special places. What is their favourite place to go on holiday? Is there a tree, park or other special place they like to go to with their family? Look at some of the special natural places in your school's region. If possible, arrange an excursion with some local traditional custodians or Indigenous ranger groups to learn about these places. If not, share photos and discuss why they are special places. Discuss geographical features and talk about which animals might use this place as their habitat.
- Have students draw their favourite place in nature. If possible, take them out on a bushwalk, to a local park or out into your playground for them to 'tune in' to nature as they draw. Discuss why it is important that we care for the environment so that these places continue to be here for us and for the animals that use them.

Science

- Divide students into five groups and provide each group with copies of one section of the text (either the kangaroo, emu, snake, goanna or eagle sections). Have the groups perform their animal's dance to the class. Discuss the features of each animal: Do they have fur, scales or feathers? Do they fly? Where do they live? What do they eat? Go around the room with each group discussing what other group's animal they are similar to. Discuss as a class how we might group the animals.
- Visit a local zoo, reptile or wildlife centre and engage in educational programs around the animals named in the book: snake, emu, kangaroo, goanna and eagle. Some cities have local rangers and Indigenous ranger programs for schools where students can go out on Country or participate in immersive incursions with rangers who teach them about native plants and animals. Search for Caring for Country, Indigenous Ranger or Aboriginal Natural Resource Management resources in your local area.
- The back cover illustration of *Our Dance* (also on p 24) depicts one child carrying an emu caller. This is an important instrument used by many First Nations people in hunting emu and emu eggs. To learn more, view the video 'Indigenous Emu Caller' by the Australian Museum: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPrPs-wTg5c>>
 - ABC TV's Play School episode 'The Emu Constellation Adventure' explains more broadly about astronomy, the earth's rotation around the sun and the Emu in the Sky, with Wiradjuri astronomer Kirsten Banks: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlrZx9ZMbXk>>

View and discuss the above resources. Discuss why Aboriginal people follow seasonal cycles, not hunting all year round but only certain times, and moving around the landscape. Discuss how useful it is to have signals such as the Emu in the Sky to guide people through the seasons and teach them what to do when. Have students create a collage, artwork or diorama using natural materials to demonstrate their learning. This also connects with the Visual Arts curriculum.

- Discuss the artefacts depicted in the book: the coolamon, hunting boomerang and emu caller. Ideally, invite a local traditional custodian or ranger in to share and discuss these artefacts in a hands-on session. There are often artefact workshops at museums, such as the Australian Museum in Sydney.

AUTHOR OF NOTES

CARA SHIPP