

A Surprise For Dingo

Written by Rina A Foti
Illustrated by Sandra Kendell

Published by Windy Hollow Books 2011

Teachers' notes

Written by Rina A Foti
Illustrated by Sandra Kendell
Published by Windy Hollow Books

Under a star speckled sky at the edge of the Great Sandy Desert a dingo howls unaware of the surprise that the other animals have waiting for him. In *A Surprise for Dingo* the reader is left wondering until the end why all the animals are running and hiding from Dingo. Is it because they are scared? The twist in the end is that they are really preparing a surprise birthday party for him.

Rina Foti lives in Perth. Her previous books include *Hooray for Chester*. Rina's stories are inspired by her fascination with Australian animals.

Sandra Kendell is an artist / illustrator and native wildlife enthusiast who lives in the Northern Territory. She works in oils, mixed media and digital art. Sandra draws her inspiration from the natural environment and is the author and illustrator of *Quoll* and *Bushwalk*.

A note from the author:

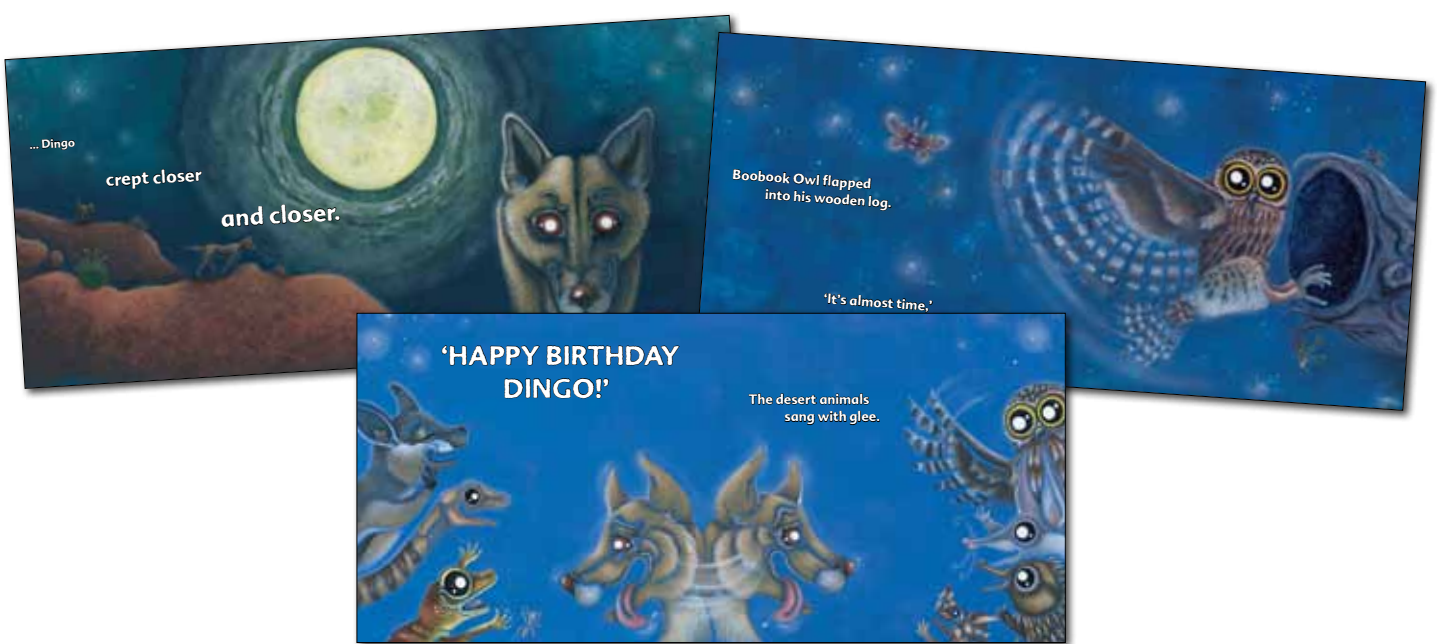
I find that whenever I embark on a new project, two underlying themes seem to almost always inspire and 'drive' my writing - tolerance and diversity. I believe that early childhood is a crucial time, not only to 'plant the literacy seed' but to also inspire and instil fundamental societal values. I also

believe that anthropomorphism is a successful literary tool to use for inspiring and instilling such important values or messages to a young reader- and that's why I like to create 'talking animal' characters.

I've always been fascinated by the unique and diverse beauty of Australia's fauna and flora. So for *A Surprise For Dingo*, it was natural for me to turn to the Australian landscape for my setting - in this case, the Great Sandy Desert. I researched the vastness of the desert, the outback colours and the very different species that inhabit this environment - each species was diverse in terms of behaviour and physical attributes. This got me thinking how society can sometimes be too quick in judging others by their external/ physical attributes. So I came up with a range of characters that were so diverse from one another to represent a diverse society and a dingo (who quite often is feared within its environment) - this aspect representing society judging others by their external attributes.

A Surprise For Dingo is a celebration of a diverse society embracing tolerance.





A note from the illustrator:

A Surprise for Dingo was illustrated using acrylic paint and chalk on mixed media paper. I applied a textured base coat then built up layers of colour to make the animals seem if they almost “glow” in the darkness, echoing their growing excitement as Dingo draws closer. The narrative suggested to me a building tension so I kept Dingo deliberately obscured until he makes his grand entrance. I had to be careful not to make the animals look too terrified about what would eventuate when Dingo finally arrives to try to generate curiosity rather than fear about what was going to happen next.

I researched the animals and landscape in “*Surprise for Dingo*” using various Australian animal field guides and sourcing images on the Internet. I wanted to create a fun, stylised but fairly accurate depiction of the characters and landscape, emphasizing key attributes. I particularly wanted to emphasize the large eyes of nocturnal creatures and the gradations of rich red dirt and sand hills of The Great Sandy Desert.

Before Reading

What knowledge does the reader bring to the book?

Look at the cover, what animals do you see?

What clues does the title give the reader?

What do you know about dingoes?

What do the colours and illustration on the front cover suggest about the time and place of the story?

Prediction

The title mentions a surprise, what could that surprise be?

In most of the book the animals are all hiding from Dingo. Why do you think they are doing this?

After reading

Did the book end in the way you expected?

How does the author create suspense in the book?

What kind of language does the author use to describe how the animals react to Dingo?

How does the illustrator create the mood of the book?

How does she convey the tension and surprise through the illustrations?

Friendship/Acceptance

In both *Hooray for Chester* and *A Surprise for Dingo*, Rina Foti has a character that is somehow left out or different to the other animals. Why do you think she chose a crocodile (in *Hooray for Chester*) and a dingo to convey this sense of difference?

Does the ending of the book challenge the way you think about dingoes?

Why do you think the author used animals instead of people?

