

# Magabala Books Teacher Notes

## *Kindred*

written by Kirli Saunders

Teacher Notes prepared by Christina Wheeler

### OVERVIEW

*Kindred*, Kirli Saunders debut poetry collection, is a pleasure to lose yourself in. Kirli has a keen eye for observation, humour and big themes that surround Love/Connection/Loss in an engaging style, complemented by evocative and poignant imagery. It talks to identity, culture, community and the role of Earth as healer. *Kindred* has the ability to grab hold of the personal in the universal and reflect this back to the reader.

- Highly commended 2018 black&write! Indigenous Writing Fellowship
- Well known spoken word performer
- Teacher notes aligned to Australian Curriculum, secondary students
- Publicity will be sought in all relevant magazines, journals and newspapers and on social media

### THEMES

- Aboriginal Peoples - Social Life and Customs
- Aboriginal Peoples - Histories and Culture
- Country
- Mother Earth
- Kin
- Love
- Relationships
- Identity
- Belonging

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Kirli Saunders** is a proud Gunai woman with ties to the Yuin, Gundungurra, Gadigal and Biripi people. Kirli is the Manager of Poetic Learning and Aboriginal Cultural Liaison at Red Room Poetry. She was awarded 'Worker of the Year 2017' at the NAIDOC Awards in the Illawarra / Shoalhaven region and has been nominated for a national NAIDOC Award in 2018. Kirli founded the Poetry in First Languages project. Her first children's picture book, *The Incredible Freedom Machines*, illustrated by Matt Ottley, was selected for Bologna Book Fair and is published internationally.



Kirli's poem 'A Dance of Hands' was Runner-up in the Nakata Brophy Prize. Her poetry has been published by Cordite and Overland and is embedded in infrastructure at Darling Harbour and the Royal Botanical Gardens, Melbourne. Kirli has been a Writer in Residence at Bundanon Trust, Q Station and The Literature Centre, Fremantle for 'The Sound of Picture Books'.

### WRITING STYLE

*Kindred* is a collection of beautifully written free-verse poetry that explores the importance of Country, kin, identity and love. Contemporary yet nostalgic, readers are invited to share Kirli Saunders' rich, deep connection with Aboriginal culture, along with her respect and love for Mother Earth and the important people in her life. As such, Saunders' perspective renders *Kindred* a truly absorbing text that helps readers to better understand critical aspects of Aboriginal culture including Mother Earth, community, respect and lore. It tenderly refers to the injustices faced by Aboriginal people following white settlement, but does so in an age-appropriate and sensitive manner. Because of its subject matter, it is best suited to a young adult audience.

### LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

These notes have been written in context with the Australian Curriculum. The appendix highlights relevant cross-curriculum priorities and content descriptors across a range of year levels that the following activities address.



## CLASSROOM IDEAS

- *Kindred* is told in three parts: *Mother*, *Earth Child* and *Lover*. As you read, record the subject matter and perspectives of the poems in each section. What attitudes, beliefs and attributes of Aboriginal culture is shared in each?
- Discuss the use of repetition in *Matriarchs* (p3). Why is this such a powerful device? How has it been used to create rhythm and meaning?
- What does *Disconnection* (p4) tell us about the innate connection between Aboriginal people and Country? How has the poet achieved this?
- What is the connection between the poems referring to mothers and those about Mother Earth?
- What is alluded to in *Aunty* (p6)? How does the poet share this with readers?
- What do poems such as *Dharawal Country* (p26) share with readers about the post-colonial Aboriginal experience?
- What aspects of Aboriginal culture are evident in poems such as *Unbind*, (p7) *Dear Ancestors* (p8) and *Old Spirits Embodied* (p11)?
- What advice is shared in *This Is It* (p10)? To whom might this poem be addressed?
- How does the inclusion of Dharawal language in *My Apologies* (p12) and Gundungurra language in *Wirritjiribin* (p32) embellish the reader's understanding of the importance of language in Aboriginal culture?
- What role does writing and the arts play in the poet's life? How does she encourage others to express themselves? Discuss in context with poems such as *New Chapter* (p14), *Play the Blues* (p76), *Train Stranger* (p78) and *Self Care* (p92-93).
- Compare *Detour* (p16) with Robert Frost's *The Road Not Taken*.
- What message is the poet conveying in *Reinventing* (p17)?
- Who is *The Artist* (p21)? What does this poem tell us about the poet's relationship with nature?
- How do the poems *Sacred Spaces I* (p22) and *Sacred Spaces II* (p23) share aspects of Aboriginal values, customs and beliefs?
- What is the poet's message in *Transplant* (p25)?
- Discuss the use of line breaks to create meaning in *Rain* (p27).
- Select a collection of poems from *Kindred* that reflects the relationship that Kirli Saunders has with nature and Mother Earth. Annotate your selections to explain your ideas.
- Discuss the use of imagery used in poems such as *Rainman* (p29) and *Quake of the Earth* (p38-39). How does imagery connect readers with the subject matter?
- The lyrebird is one of Kirli Saunders' personal totems. With reference to *Wirritjiribin* (p32) and *Totemic Love* (p56), discuss the role that totems play in Aboriginal culture.
- What message can be taken from poems such as *Wildflower* (p33)?
- What are the messenger birds communicating in *Bundanon* (p43)? How does this reflect the interconnectedness between Aboriginal people and nature?
- In *Chasing Trains* (p54-55), the poet shares the relationship she has with her father. Write a poem that shares the relationship that you have with a parent.
- *This City Misses You* (p57) highlights the streetscape of Sydney. Write a poem that reflects your favourite aspects of your hometown.
- Write a poem that celebrates one of your siblings, similar to *Sister* (p59) or *Brother* (p61-61).
- Choose a small collection of poems from *Kindred* to use in a discussion about the importance of love in the text.
- How does *Play the Blues* (p76) perfectly reflect the power of music to mend hearts?
- In *New Years Wish (Part I)* (p82) and *New Years Wish (Part II)* (p83), the poet speaks earnestly to two of her friends. What is she wanting to say to them? Write a poem to one of your friends, sharing your hopes and encouragement for them.
- Re-read the poem entitled *Kindred* (p84-85). What sentiments does this poem capture? Why is this the title of the text?
- Write a reflection that explains what *The Jackpot* (p86) is saying about love?
- With reference to the final poem in the text, *Sans Ego* (p96), write a journal entry that discusses the significance of this poem to *Kindred*. Discuss the significance of the typesetting of the title on the front cover.
- Kirli Saunders' voice is instantly arresting, drawing readers into the text with her rhythmic and evocative language choices. Discuss the importance of a strong sense of voice in writing. How has this been achieved?
- *Kindred* goes to great lengths to emphasise the central place of country and Mother Earth to indigenous culture. As you read the text, keep note of the many ways in which the poet expresses this. Write a reflection to share the interconnectedness that Aboriginal people have with country, identity and culture.
- Explain the relationship that the poet shares with her mother (*Matriachs* p3) and father (*Chasing Trains* p54-55). Use examples from the text to help in your explanation.
- Discuss the power of free verse poetry in creating evocative and tangible messages. Experiment with writing your own free verse poetry.



**7 English**  
Literature

- Identify and explore ideas and viewpoints about events, issues and characters represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts ([ACELT1619](#))
  - Discuss aspects of texts, for example their aesthetic and social value, using relevant and appropriate metalanguage ([ACELT1803](#))
- 

**History**

- The importance of conserving the remains of the ancient past, including the heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples ([ACDSEH148](#))
- 

**8 English**  
Literature

- Explore the ways that ideas and viewpoints in literary texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts may reflect or challenge the values of individuals and groups([ACELT1626](#))
  - Explore the interconnectedness of Country/Place, People, Identity and Culture in texts including those by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors ([ACELT1806](#))
  - Recognise and explain differing viewpoints about the world, cultures, individual people and concerns represented in texts ([ACELT1807](#))
- 

**9 English**  
Literature

- Interpret and compare how representations of people and culture in literary texts are drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts ([ACELT1633](#))
  - Reflect on, discuss and explore notions of literary value and how and why such notions vary according to context ([ACELT1634](#))
  - Analyse texts from familiar and unfamiliar contexts, and discuss and evaluate their content and the appeal of an individual author's literary style ([ACELT1636](#))
- 

**10 English**  
Literature

- Compare and evaluate a range of representations of individuals and groups in different historical, social and cultural contexts ([ACELT1639](#))
  - Evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in texts ([ACELT1812](#))
  - Compare and evaluate how 'voice' as a literary device can be used in a range of different types of texts such as poetry to evoke particular emotional responses ([ACELT1643](#))
- 

**Cross-Curriculum Priorities**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture

---

