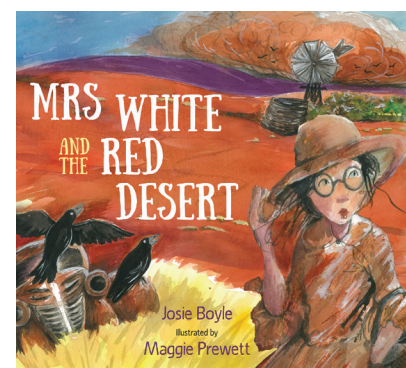


# Magabala Books • Teacher Notes

## Mrs White and the Red Desert

Written by Josie Wowolla Boyle

Illustrated by Maggie Prewett



Teacher Notes prepared by Christina Wheeler

### OVERVIEW

- A lyrical story from a master storyteller that celebrates the diversity of the Australian landscape
- Outstanding collaboration between two WA creators
- Rich illustrations evoke the Western Desert country in a joyful and humorous way
- Well-suited to the Australian Curriculum

### THEMES

- Deserts
- Respect
- Understanding
- Indigenous culture

### AUDIENCE AND WRITING STYLE

*Mrs White and the Red Desert* is a picture book written in first person, past tense and is suitable for lower primary aged children. It includes cleverly crafted and poetic writing that is complemented by beautiful artwork to create a simple yet poignant message about the importance of respect and understanding of place.

### LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

This book and the classroom activities provided are primarily relevant to the following areas of the Australian Curriculum:

Learning area	Year level
English	Years F, 1, 3, 4
History	Years F, 3, 4
Geography	Year 4

The appendix highlights relevant content descriptions, cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities that relate to the text and classroom ideas provided.

### CULTURAL NOTES

- Stories and songs have been used over thousands of years to pass on knowledge of land and culture

For information about teaching Australian Indigenous content see [Teaching Indigenous content with Magabala Books](#).

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR



**Josie Wowolla Boyle** is a Wonghi woman from WA. She is an acclaimed storyteller, singer and visual artist who for many years has entertained people with stories from her Wongutha heritage. Her other books include *Bubby: A Christmas Adventure* and *The Spotty Dotty Lady* (both illustrated by Fern Martins).



**Maggie Prewett** is a descendant of the Ngarluma people of the Pilbara region of WA. Maggie is a celebrated artist and has illustrated several Magabala Books' children's titles including *The Old Frangipani Tree at Flying Fish Point* (Trina Saffioti),

*The Grumpy Lighthouse Keeper* (Terrizita Corpus), and the award-winning *Two Mates* (Melanie Prewett).



## CLASSROOM IDEAS

### English

- Using sand in boxes or visiting the school's sandpit, draw the story of *Mrs White and the Red Desert* in the sand to help you retell the story to a friend.
- Using a graphic organiser, compare your home and local environment with the one depicted in *Mrs White and the Red Desert*.
- The figurative language used throughout *Mrs White and the Red Desert* adds significantly to the description and mood of the text. Take time to analyse the way in which the author has included this language. Some examples include:
  - We lived...in a corrugated iron house that was wavy buckled and bent just like our grandmother's hair → imagery and simile
  - Our houses were all higgledy-piggledy. Our gardens were all higgledy-piggledy → repetition and rhyme
  - Hot desert winds blew in through the rusty old nail holes and wooden shutters → imagery
  - The cold wind raced around the house as if it was crying out for the moon to protect us → personification
  - When it rained, the soft pitter-patter on the roof sang us to sleep like a lullaby → alliteration, personification and simile
  - Sand and spinifex whipped our legs and flew at our heads → imagery and personification
- Discuss the children's game of pretending that the crows are dressed up and going to town. Share some make-believe games that you and your siblings play.
- Create an invitation to invite your teacher to dinner. Alternatively, host a class 'dinner' and invite your principal to attend.
- Why do the girls in the story want Mrs White to come and visit their house? In a journal entry, share something that you would really like your teacher to know about you or your home life. How might this help your teacher to understand you better?
- What can you tell about Mrs White from the illustrations and the fact she gets cranky about grubby homework? How do you think Mrs White might change after her visit to the house?
- Recreate your favourite page opening of *Mrs White and the Red Desert*, taking care to replicate the artwork used by Maggie Prewett.
- Why do you think the author called the teacher Mrs White? What is her message to readers about the importance of respecting and understanding one's place?
- Using images of the Western Australian desert, create a 'Y Chart' to help describe what you would see, feel and hear in such a habitat. Use this brainstorm to write a piece of description about the desert.
- Compare *Mrs White and the Red Desert* with Roseanne Hawke's picture book, *Mustara*, both of which incorporate the harsh elements of their desert settings.
- Discuss the problem-solving strategy used by the students to deal with the problem they were having with Mrs White. What does this teach us about dealing with such issues in a non-confrontational way?
- In the role of Mrs White, write a diary entry about your experiences at and after the home visit.
- With older students, use *The Girl from the Great Sandy Desert* by Mona Jukuna, Pat Lowe and Mervyn Street as a companion text to *Mrs White and the Red Desert* to help explore further the importance of Country and Place to Aboriginal peoples who live in the desert.
- Investigate the techniques associated with effective storytelling. Practise these skills by telling a story to a partner. There are many websites with such advice, for instance: <http://www.teachprimary.com/learning-resources/view/storytelling-tips-for-primary-teachers>

### History/Geography

- The narrator tells us that as a child, she drew in the sand to tell her stories. Discuss the importance of oral story telling in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. (The storyteller's role was not just to entertain but to preserve the history, traditional values and lore of indigenous people.)
- The narrator makes reference to playing in the mud as a child. Share with the class the types of games you used to play as a child. Allow students to share the sorts of games they like to play? Discuss which games have stayed relatively similar over time as opposed to those that have changed.



- Conduct research and note-taking on deserts. Create an information report on this biome. Discuss the importance of deserts - including natural vegetation - to both animals and people. What are some threats to this environment in Australia? How does this environment play an important role in Aboriginal culture?
- The red sand storm creates a huge mess. To help understand what it is like to be in a storm such as this, view a YouTube clip of a sand or dust storm, such as the following scene (of a dust storm) from the Australian movie *The Water Diviner*: <http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=youtube+dust+storm+water+diviner&view=detail&mid=7402C90FE3D4C9B37AA57402C90FE3D4C9B37AA5&FORM=VIRE>
- How does the environment and housing in *Mrs White and the Red Desert* compare with your neighborhood and environment?
- Use Google Earth to view the desert surrounding the Kalgoorlie area of Western Australia to gain a better understanding of this setting.



## APPENDIX - LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

Year	
<b>F</b>	<p><b>English Literature</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise that texts are created by authors who tell stories and share experiences that may be similar or different to students' own experiences (<a href="#">ACELT1575</a>)</li> <li>Share feelings and thoughts about the events and characters in texts (<a href="#">ACELT1783</a>)</li> <li>Retell familiar literary texts through performance, use of illustrations and images (<a href="#">ACELT1580</a>)</li> </ul> <p><b>History</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How the stories of families and the past can be communicated, for example through photographs, artefacts, books, oral histories, digital media, and museums (<a href="#">ACHHK004</a>)</li> </ul>
<b>1</b>	<p><b>English Literature</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss how authors create characters using language and images (<a href="#">ACELT1581</a>)</li> <li>Discuss characters and events in a range of literary texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students' own experiences (<a href="#">ACELT1582</a>)</li> <li>Discuss features of plot, character and setting in different types of literature and explore some features of characters in different texts (<a href="#">ACELT1584</a>)</li> <li>Recreate texts imaginatively using drawing, writing, performance and digital forms of communication (<a href="#">ACELT1586</a>)</li> </ul> <p><b>Literacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respond to texts drawn from a range of cultures and experiences (<a href="#">ACELY1655</a>)</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>English Language</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand that languages have different written and visual communication systems, different oral traditions and different ways of constructing meaning (<a href="#">ACELA1475</a>)</li> </ul> <p><b>Literature</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss how language is used to describe the settings in texts, and explore how the settings shape the events and influence the mood of the <a href="#">narrative</a> (<a href="#">ACELT1599</a>)</li> <li><a href="#">Create</a> imaginative texts based on characters, settings and events from students' own and other cultures using <a href="#">visual features</a>, for example perspective, distance and angle (<a href="#">ACELT1601</a>)</li> </ul> <p><b>Literacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the audience and purpose of imaginative, informative and persuasive texts (<a href="#">ACELY1678</a>)</li> </ul> <p><b>History</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The importance of Country and Place to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples who belong to a local area. (<a href="#">ACHHK060</a>)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>English Literature</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss how authors and illustrators make stories exciting, moving and absorbing and hold readers' interest by using various techniques, for example character development and plot tension (<a href="#">ACELT1605</a>)</li> </ul> <p><b>History/Geography</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The diversity and longevity of Australia's first peoples and the ways Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples are connected to Country and Place (land, sea, waterways and skies) and the implications for their daily lives. (<a href="#">ACHHK077</a>)</li> <li>The importance of environments, including <a href="#">natural vegetation</a>, to animals and people (<a href="#">ACHASSK088</a>)</li> </ul>
<b>Cross curriculum priorities</b>	
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures	
<b>General Capabilities</b>	
Literacy, Intercultural understanding	

