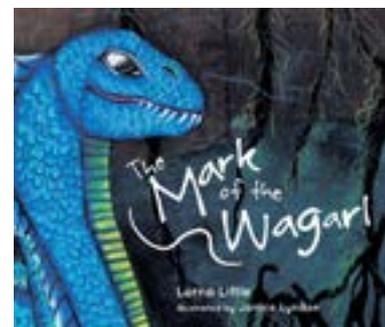


# Magabala Books • Teacher Notes

## The Mark of the Wagarl

Written by Lorna Little

Illustrated by Janice Lyndon



Teacher Notes prepared by Christina Wheeler

### OVERVIEW

*The Mark of the Wagarl* tells the story of Maadjit Walken, the Sacred Rainbow Serpent. She is the mother spirit and creator of the Nyoongar Country of south west Western Australia. She made her first child, Maadjit Wagarl, the guardian spirit of all the rivers and fresh waters. This story shares how a young boy receives the Maadjit Wagarl for his totem.

### THEMES

- Aboriginal culture
- Spiritual beliefs
- Connection to country
- Stories

### AUDIENCE AND WRITING STYLE

*The Mark of the Wagarl* is a picture book suitable for middle primary students. Simply and effectively told, the narrative contains a strong moral and insights into Indigenous culture.

### LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

This book and the classroom activities provided are primarily relevant to the English, History and Geography for year levels 2-4. The appendix highlights relevant content descriptions, cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities.

### CULTURAL NOTES

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

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

Lorna Little was born in 1935 in Meekatharra, Western Australia. Her early years were spent on the Moore River Native Settlement. During World War II, her family moved to Pinjarra, her ancestral home, where she learnt the Nyoongar language and stories of her people. Lorna left school at an early age and returned to studies later in life, graduating with a Bachelor of Social Science in 1988. She was an Elder of the Bindjareb Nyoongar community.

Janice Lyndon, a Nyoongar woman, was born in 1965 in Pinjarra, Western Australia. She lives in Perth and is the mother of nine children. Janice has painted from an early age and draws inspiration from her Elders and the environment. She has participated in several group exhibitions.



## CLASSROOM IDEAS

- Before reading the story, read and discuss the introductory explanation about Maadjit Walken, the Sacred Rainbow Serpent and her first child, Maadjit Wagarl, the Sacred Water Snake.
- Explore the glossary of Nyoongar language words at the start of the book. List these words and draw pictures to illustrate what each means.
- On the first page opening, we are told that 'the old people would tell the children many stories about the Wagarl'. Why do you think these stories were told?
- Why did the people make sure that they always knew where the Wagarl was?
- Why did Baardi disobey his elders and decide to swim in the river?
- Why did Baardi receive the Wagarl as his totem?
- Discuss the concept of spiritual things that are not visible. Why does Baardi think that the Wagarl is not down in the cave?
- Write a reflection of a time when you disobeyed your parents' instructions. What were the consequences? Discuss the concept that there are consequences for your actions. How is this shown in the text?
- Using a map of Australia, identify Nyoongar country, which covers the south west corner between Geraldton and Esperance. Thinking about *The Mark of the Wagarl*, discuss why this area is special to Nyoongar people. What connections to the area do they have?
- Research the role that totems play in Aboriginal culture.
- Using images from the internet to reflect this story, create a digital story of *The Mark of the Wagarl*.
- Read other stories that share the spiritual beliefs of Aboriginal people. You may wish to search for such a story from your own local area.
- Invite a guest speaker to share local stories and beliefs with your class. Choose one of these stories to recreate as a picture book of your own.
- *The Mark of the Wagarl* includes a message about how to behave. Is this message useful for you and your life? Write your own story with a message about how to behave.
- The artwork in *The Mark of the Wagarl* uses beautiful, strong colours and is different from other types of Indigenous artwork. Using watercolours, choose a scene from *The Mark of the Wagarl* to illustrate in a style comparable to Janice Lyndon's.



## APPENDIX - LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM F-10 (VERSION 8)

Year	English	Humanities and Social Sciences
2	<p>Understand that different <a href="#">types of texts</a> have identifiable <a href="#">text</a> structures and <a href="#">language features</a> that help the <a href="#">text</a> serve its purpose (<a href="#">ACELA1463</a>)</p> <p>Identify visual representations of characters' actions, reactions, speech and thought processes in narratives, and consider how these images add to or contradict or multiply the meaning of accompanying words (<a href="#">ACELA1469</a>)</p> <p>Discuss how depictions of characters in print, sound and images reflect the contexts in which they were created (<a href="#">ACELT1587</a>)</p> <p>Compare opinions about characters, events and settings in and between texts (<a href="#">ACELT1589</a>)</p> <p>Identify aspects of different types of literary texts that entertain, and give reasons for personal preferences (<a href="#">ACELT1590</a>)</p> <p>Discuss the characters and settings of different texts and explore how language is used to present these features in different ways (<a href="#">ACELT1591</a>)</p>	<p><b>Geography</b></p> <p>The ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples maintain special connections to particular <a href="#">Country/Place</a> (<a href="#">ACHASSK049</a>)</p>
3	<p>Understand that languages have different written and visual communication systems, different oral traditions and different ways of constructing meaning (<a href="#">ACELA1475</a>)</p> <p>Discuss texts in which characters, events and settings are portrayed in different ways, and speculate on the authors' reasons (<a href="#">ACELT1594</a>)</p> <p>Draw connections between personal experiences and the worlds of texts, and share responses with others (<a href="#">ACELT1596</a>)</p> <p>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>)</p>	<p><b>History</b></p> <p>The importance of <a href="#">Country/Place</a> to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples who belong to a <a href="#">local area</a> (<a href="#">ACHASSK062</a>)</p>
4	<p>Understand that <a href="#">Standard Australian English</a> is one of many social dialects used in Australia, and that while it originated in England it has been influenced by many other languages (<a href="#">ACELA1487</a>)</p> <p>Make connections between the ways different authors may represent similar storylines, ideas and relationships (<a href="#">ACELT1602</a>)</p> <p>Discuss literary experiences with others, sharing responses and expressing a <a href="#">point of view</a> (<a href="#">ACELT1603</a>)</p> <p>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>)</p>	<p><b>History</b></p> <p>The diversity of Australia's first peoples and the long and continuous connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to <a href="#">Country/Place</a> (land, sea, waterways and skies) (<a href="#">ACHASSK083</a>)</p> <p><b>Geography</b></p> <p>The <a href="#">custodial responsibility</a> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have for <a href="#">Country/Place</a>, and how this influences views about <a href="#">sustainability</a> (<a href="#">ACHASSK089</a>)</p>
<p><b>Cross curriculum priorities</b></p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Sustainability</p>		
<p><b>General capabilities</b></p> <p>Literacy, Personal and social capability, Ethical understanding, Intercultural understanding</p>		

