

Magabala Books • Teacher Notes

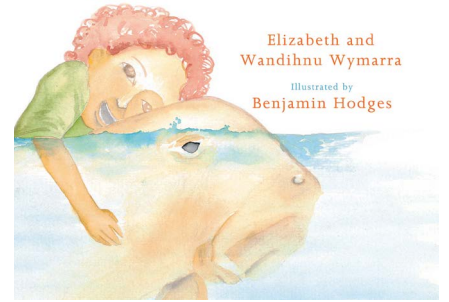
Wandihnu and the Old Dugong

Written by Elizabeth and Wandihnu Wymarra

Illustrated by Benjamin Hodges

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Teacher Notes prepared by Christina Wheeler

OVERVIEW

A contemporary story about a young girl who has grown up in the city and who is to return to Badu Island to stay with her aka (grandmother). It is time for Wandihnu to learn about the customs and culture of her people who come from the Torres Strait. The night before she leaves, Wandihnu slowly drifts off to sleep, and she begins to dream about the journey, about her aka and about the adventure ahead.

Wandihnu learns a great lesson when she refuses to learn Kala Lagaw Ya, her native Torres Strait language. When her aka becomes sick Wandihnu is required to get medicinal oil from the old dugong to heal her. But the old dugong won't listen, he only speaks Kala Lagaw Ya. If only Wandihnu had paid attention...

- Encourages children to research their own background and heritage
- Positive story about Indigenous and Torres Strait identity in the twenty first century
- A morality tale that highlights the importance of listening to and respecting your elders

THEMES

- Torres Strait Islander culture
- Torres Strait Islands
- Dugongs
- Grandparents

AUDIENCE AND WRITING STYLE

Wandihnu and the Old Dugong tells the story of a young city girl who visits her grandmother on the remote Badu Island in the Torres Strait. Excited and nervous about her first visit to the island, Wandihnu dreams about her trip, in which her Aka tries to teach her about the culture and language of her people. Distracted and reluctant to spend her holiday learning, she quickly discovers how crucial these lessons are. Incorporating Kala Lagaw Ya language from the Western Torres Strait, *Wandihnu and the Old Dugong* shares the importance of respect, culture and the place of family in one's upbringing. It is suitable for primary-aged children, particularly those in the middle grades.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS AND ILLUSTRATOR



Elizabeth Wymarra was born on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait and is known for her work as a performing artist, comedian and playwright. Elizabeth and Wandihnu began writing stories as a mother-daughter bonding exercise, and they have made many visits back to Badu Island to research stories of their family and Torres Strait Islander culture.

Wandihnu Wymarra has had a passion for writing since she first learnt to read and write. She wrote her first play when she was just seven years old.



Benjamin Hodges is of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent with bloodlines that trace back to Jamaica, China and England. He has been a professional artist for many years and his passion for art goes back to his childhood. In 2005 he won the National NAIDOC Poster Award, which saw his work displayed nationally in Australia. *Wandihnu and the Old Dugong* is the first book he has illustrated.



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-4
Humanities and Social Science	Years F-4
Science	Years 1; 4

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

CLASSROOM IDEAS

English

- Why does Wandihnu's mother send her to Badu Island? Why is it more powerful that she learns about her culture from her Aka, and from the island itself?
- Discuss the importance of grandparents in sharing wisdom and cultural lessons in Aboriginal culture. What have you learnt from your own grandparents? How is your relationship with your grandparents different to the one you have with your parents? Share in a reflection.
- On an A3 sheet, draw a diagonal line from corner to corner. On each side of the line, show the differences between life in Sydney and life on Badu Island. Use both words and images to help with this comparison.
- Why does Aka want to teach Wandihnu her traditional language before sharing other island customs? What does this tell us about the role of language in customs and daily life?
- Wandihnu learns her language by writing in the sand. Try this same technique, either in one of the school's sandpits, or by filling trays with sand and practising outside.
- Use the language guide at the back of the text to learn how to pronounce various letters and sounds in the Kala Lagaw Ya language. Practise saying the dugong's message to Wandihnu.
- When she visits Front Beach, Wandihnu 'scrunche[s] her toes into the sand'. Use an X Chart to brainstorm words and phrases that you associate with the beach. In each section of the chart, use the senses 'See', 'Hear', 'Smell' and 'Feel' to help generate ideas. Use these to write a piece of description about the beach.
- How does Wandihnu's body language show that she is not really interested in learning, and that she'd rather go and play with the other children on the island?
- Why does she take Aka's illness to make Wandihnu finally value the lessons that her grandmother has tried to teach her?
- Why do you think the author has made most of the story in *Wandihnu and the Old Dugong* part of a dream?
- What is Kulba Dungal's message to Wandihnu? Why is this message such an important one? Why should she listen to her Aka? Why should you listen to your grandparents?
- In your own words, explain the main message of *Wandihnu and the Old Dugong*.
- In the role of Wandihnu, write a reflection that shares what you have learnt from your visit to Badu Island.
- Retell *Wandihnu and the Old Dugong* in your own words
- Which is your favourite page opening? Why? Share with a friend.



HASS

- Compare *Wandihnu and the Old Dugong* with *My Island Home* by Neil Murray. How do these texts explore the connection that Torres Strait Islander people have to country?
- Create a list of the island traditions that are evident in *Wandihnu and the Old Dugong*. Use the illustrations to help.
- Just like Aka, the dugong is also old. What comment is the author making about the wisdom of elders and the importance of them in our lives? What is the role of elders in Torres Strait Islander culture?
- Create a map to track Wandihnu's journey from Sydney to Badu Island. How does the remote location of the island and the fact that Wandihnu travels there show the importance of learning one's cultural heritage first hand? Why couldn't she just read about it or learn from her mother in Sydney?

Science

- Wandihnu finds the old dugong, Kulba Dungal, in the seagrass beds. Conduct further research into dugongs, including their habitat, diet, appearance and life cycle. Share your findings in an information report or voice-recorded multi-modal presentation.



APPENDIX - LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

Year	Curriculum Area		
F	English Language <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the different contribution of words and images to meaning in stories and informative texts (ACELA1786) Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise that texts are created by authors who tell stories and share experiences that may be similar or different to students' own experiences (ACELT1575) Share feelings and thoughts about the events and characters in texts (ACELT1783) Identify some features of texts including events and characters and retell events from a text (ACELT1578) Retell familiar literary texts through performance, use of illustrations and images (ACELT1580) 		
	HASS Geography <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Country/Place on which the school is located and why Country/Place is important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACHASSK016) 		
1	English Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss how authors create characters using language and images (ACELT1581) Discuss characters and events in a range of literary texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students' own experiences (ACELT1582) 		
	Science Biological Sciences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Living things have a variety of external features (ACSSU017) 		
2	English Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss how depictions of characters in print, sound and images reflect the contexts in which they were created (ACELT1587) Compare opinions about characters, events and settings in and between texts (ACELT1589) Discuss the characters and settings of different texts and explore how language is used to present these features in different ways (ACELT1591) 		
	HASS Geography <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples maintain special connections to particular Country/Place (ACHASSK049) 		
3	English Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw connections between personal experiences and the worlds of texts, and share responses with others (ACELT1596) 		
	HASS History <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The importance of Country/Place to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples who belong to a local area (ACHASSK062) 		
4	English Language <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand that Standard Australian English is one of many social dialects used in Australia, and that while it originated in England it has been influenced by many other languages (ACELA1487) Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 (ACELT1605) 		
	HASS History <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The diversity of Australia's first peoples and the long and continuous connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to Country/Place (land, sea, waterways and skies) (ACHASSK083) 		
	Science <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Living things have life cycles (ACSSU072) Living things depend on each other and the environment to survive (ACSSU073) 		
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