

History of the First Australians 47

Trip to the Top End

Mark Tirris

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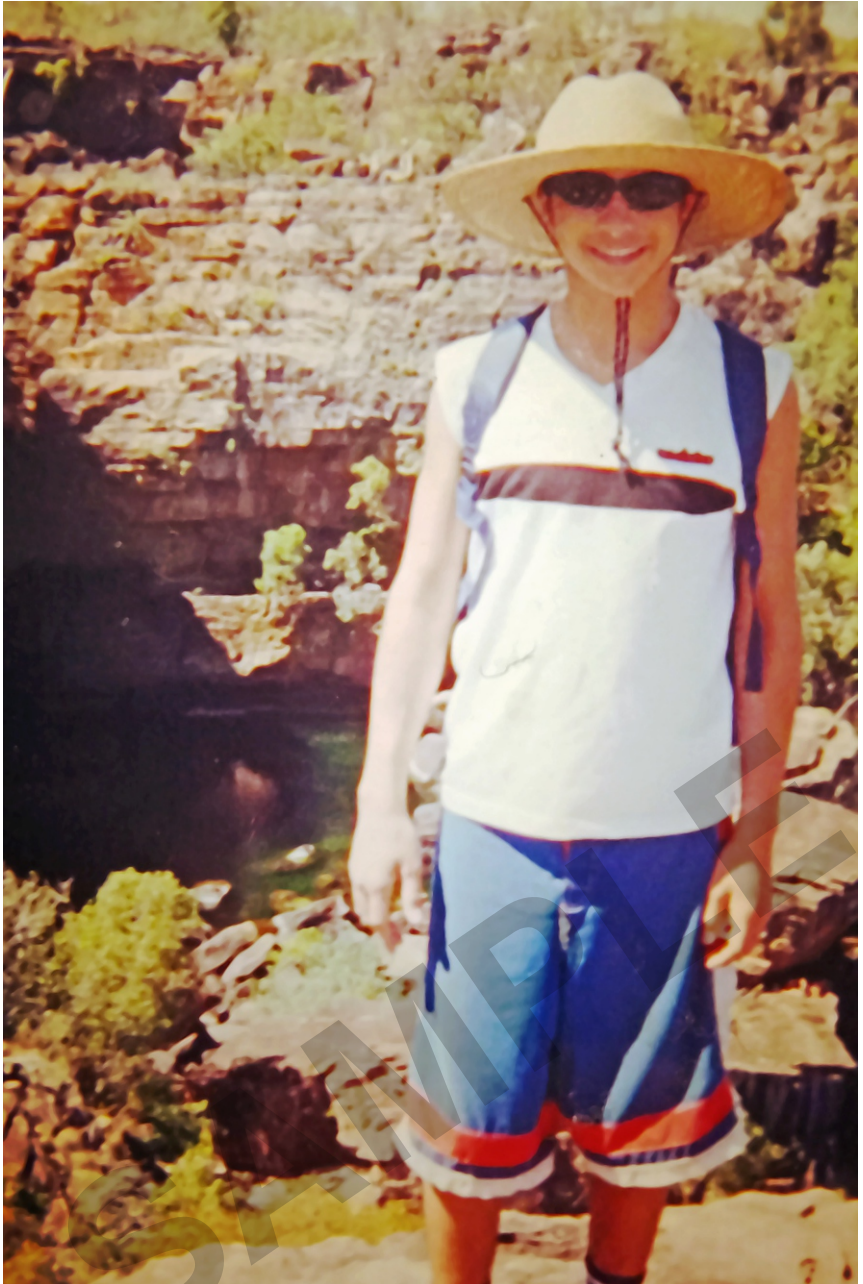
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When I was a teenager, my mother and I visited the Top End. The Northern Territory is a vast area. It is six times the size of Victoria. The Top End is so big that it has different climates. It has tropical rainforests in the northern half and semi-arid desert country towards the south. The top half is the Top End. The south is the Red Centre.

The Aboriginal people in the Top End have been there for thousands of years. Some of the people speak their Aboriginal language every day. They live off the land. Aboriginal culture is strong. The coastal Aboriginal people had contact with people from Indonesia long before Europeans got to Australia. They would trade and share things like weapons, pearls, food, sea slugs and turtle shells. The Top End is where the didgeridoo is used. They call the didgeridoo a yidaki.



Darwin is a large city on the coast with big tide changes. During low tide, the waterline is a long way from the shore. The low tide exposes muddy flats. Around the Darwin area, the Aboriginal people hunt dugong. The dugongs can be three metres long and weigh 400 kilograms. The dugongs come to the surface to breathe through nostrils near the top of their snouts. Dugongs are protected, and only Aboriginal people can hunt them. Native Title is a special law for Aboriginal people which allows them to continue their ancestors' culture. Hunting dugong is part of the First Peoples' culture.



Word bank

Northern Territory	vehicle	Luritja
Victoria	Germany	ancient
tropical	England	process
rainforests	America	fossils
Aboriginal	adventure	scientists
thousands	bushwalking	cherish
language	kayaking	
culture	crocodile	
Indonesia	terrific	
Europeans	cruising	
didgeridoo	buffalo	
yidaki	magpie	
Darwin	excited	
dugong	fierce	
kilograms	reptiles	
nostrils	Uluru	
protected	relatives	
ancestors	Anangu	
safari	communicated	
Kakadu	knowledge	

Reading Recovery Level: 26

Word count: 980

Content: Information recount

ACARA F-10 references:

Learning Areas: English; Science; Humanities and Social Sciences; The Arts; Languages.

General Capabilities: Literacy; Critical and Creative Thinking; Personal and Social Capability; Intercultural Understanding.

Cross Curriculum Priorities: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures; Sustainability.

Teacher Notes:

Trip to the Top End is a personal recount/report of the author's visit to the Top End of the Northern Territory with his Mum when he was a teenager. Mark retells his journey from an Indigenous perspective and talks about the special places he visited along the way which are so important to the First Nations' People. Mark's story looks at the science, geography and climate of this remarkable region of Australia.

Discussion points for consideration:

1. What were some of the things that Mark saw in the NT?
2. What were some of the towns that Mark went to in the NT?
3. Mark is a Wiradjuri man from NSW. Is his First Nations' language the same as that in the NT?

Difficult words to be introduced and practised before reading this book:

Northern Territory, Victoria, tropical, rainforests, Aboriginal, thousands, language, culture, Indonesia, Europeans, didgeridoo, yidaki, Darwin, dugong, kilograms, nostrils, protected, ancestors, safari, Kakadu, vehicle, Germany, England, America, adventure, bushwalking, kayaking, crocodile, terrific, cruising, buffalo, magpie, excited, fierce, reptiles, Uluru, relatives, Anangu, communicated, knowledge, Luritja, ancient, process, fossils, scientists.

Acknowledgement of the First Nations' People: We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Sensitivity Notice: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are **warned** that the following series may contain images - photographs and illustrations and text about deceased persons.

Caring for Country

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Author's Bio:

Mark Tirris is a proud descendant of the Wiradjuri Peoples of South West NSW and has always been active in his local Aboriginal community in Northern NSW. He successfully completed a Master's degree in Indigenous Studies (Well-being) through Southern Cross University. His professional experience includes five years working in several Aboriginal organisations and managing his own Indigenous consultancy business.



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