

Mamang

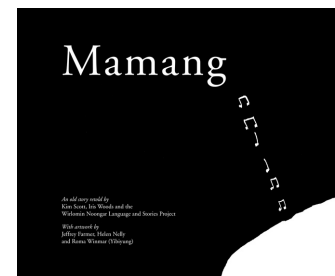
Retold by Kim Scott, Iris Woods and the Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories Project
 Illustrated by Jeffrey Farmer, Helen Nelly and Roma Winmar (Yibiyung)

Synopsis

Upon seeing a *mamang* off the coast of his homeland, a young Noongar man bravely dives into its belly, setting off on an adventure to far-away shores. By squeezing the whale's heart and singing the old song, he is eventually set back on dry land, where he is welcomed by a new community. Years later, the Noongar returns home with his family.

Inspired by a creation story told in 1931 to an American linguist, this story was returned to the Noongar people in the 1980s and has since been reclaimed and workshopped with the community.

***Mamang* is part of an Indigenous language recovery program undertaken with the Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories Project.**



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Themes

- First Nations Culture
 - Language – Noongar
 - Stories
 - Artwork
 - Ancestors
- Language Revival
- Community
- Whales

About the Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories Project

The Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories Project Incorporated is an association with aims of reclaiming, supporting, promoting and maintaining Wirlomin Noongar cultural heritage. They work to reclaim Wirlomin stories and dialect, in support of the maintenance of Noongar language, and to share them with Noongar families and communities as part of a process to claim, control and enhance Wirlomin Noongar cultural heritage. More information can be found on the Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories [website](#).

Links to the Australian Curriculum

Learning Area	Year level
English	2-4
Hass	2-4

Writing Style

Mamang is a bilingual text told in both Noongar and English. It includes an extensive glossary to help readers learn more about the Noongar language. Originating from oral storytelling, the written text reflects a combination of old Noongar with more contemporary versions of the language, with a literal English translation beneath. It then retells the story in English prose. *Mamang* shares the special connection the Noongar people have with the sea, and the importance of stories about ancestors. The illustrations work seamlessly with the story to engage readers in a powerful story that was almost lost forever. It is suited to mid-upper primary audiences.

An essay at the end of *Noongar Mambara Bakitj* not only shares the importance of this story to Wirlomin Noongar people, but the regenerative nature of this project. Beyond the pages of this series lies a community that has reclaimed its lost language and been strengthened by the sharing of stories that 'give voice to the sounds of long ago.'

Study notes

- Before reading, use the cover, blurb, and endpapers to discuss the characters, settings, and possible events of the story. Why might there be music notes on the cover?
- Examine the illustrations before reading the written text. Using the illustrations, make predictions about the written story. Compare your predictions with the story after reading.
- Why is it unusual for a whale to be swimming so close to the coastline? Why might it have been there?
- What do you think prompts the Noongar man to dive into the whale's abdomen?
- Discuss the description of the whale's insides being 'like a cave.' Expand on this idea by discussing what the man might have seen, heard, and felt once inside the whale. Add your ideas to a 'Y Chart' (see, hear, feel).
- In what ways is the Noongar man brave?
- What is the role of song in *Mamang*? To find out more about the place of song in First Nations cultures, read relevant pages of Isaiah Firebrace's *Come Together* (Hardie Grant Explore).

Study notes continued

- In the role of the young man, write a journal about your experiences in *Mamang*.
- What do you think is the main message in this story?
- Summarise *Mamang* into a six-word story.
- Retell this story from the role of either the Noongar man or the whale.
- Using just the illustrations, share with a partner what is happening in this story.
- How does *Mamang* share the Noongar people's connection to the sea?
- With reference to the page opening below, discuss how the Noongar man is welcomed.



- How do projects such as *Mamang* show the value of bringing Elders and community together to revive ancestral language?
- Refer to the glossary at the back of the text to further explore Noongar language. Use it in conjunction with the Noongar telling of the story to better understand the richness of the story. Discuss the differences between the language features and sentence structures of Noongar and English.
- Using an interactive First Languages map of Australia such as that found at <https://gambay.com.au/> find out more about the Noongar area, as well as information about your local area.
- After reading *Mamang*, re-read the illustrations in the text. How do they support and extend the storytelling? How do they help you to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the text?
- Discuss the perspective of looking through the whale's eye and how this reflects the restorative nature of hearing this story through the lens of ancestral language.
- Explain what is happening in the illustration below. What can we learn about the role of Elders and Ancestors through stories like *Mamang*?



Study notes continued

- On the page above, the text reads: 'And that's our home now. And they our old people, unna?' Who is telling this story? Why do they ask this question at the end? How does this show the importance of connections with the Old People?
- How is this story used to explain the formation of rocks on the beach? What landforms in your area relate to local First Nations stories?
- Retell this story through a dramatic recreation, artwork, or shadow puppet play.
- The team behind this series say that 'stories live longer and stronger by being shared.' Discuss.
- Share the process of how the stories in this series were brought back to life through the Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories Project (see notes at the back of the text for more information). How does sharing stories like *Mamang* allow First Nations Peoples to 'claim, control and enhance' their heritage?
- Download and listen to readings of this story in Noongar and English using the following link: <https://www.wirlomin.com.au/stories/books/>. When listening in Noongar, take note of the rhythm of the storytelling. Compare the audio with the written language. With a partner, take turns reading parts of the story in language. In addition, view a reading of this story on Country: <https://www.wirlomin.com.au/stories/books/mamang/>
- What is the place of stories in First Nations cultures? For additional understanding, use relevant pages from *Come Together* by Isaiah Firebrace (Hardie Grant Explore) as a companion text.
- What stories from your culture have been passed down through generations? What do you like about these stories? What important lessons or messages do they include? Share in a reflection.
- Invite First Nations community members to share language and stories from your local area.
- The process of creating texts like this is quite involved. In the case of reviving *Mamang*, it began with storytelling, before paintings and drawings helped to shape the story of so long ago. Elders began speaking about sites and others described places that many had never seen. From here, the story began to grow. The written version could then be completed, first in Noongar, then in English. Compare the Indigenous methodology of storytelling with the more linear approach often used by western societies. (Western: Firstly, the story is recorded in written text. Next, page breaks within the text are determined, breaking the story into its various stages. Illustrations are then created to add elements of visual literacy. These stories tend to have a traditional 'beginning middle and end,' as opposed to the more circular nature of First Nations' stories.) To further explore the richness of Indigenous storytelling, share an oral story with the class before creating illustrations, then adding the written text. Write a reflection of telling stories in this way.

Links to the Australian Curriculum

Year 2

English

Language

- Understand that images add to or multiply the meanings of a text (AC9E2LA08)
- Experiment with and begin to make conscious choices of vocabulary to suit the topic (AC9E2LA09)

Literature

- Discuss how characters and settings are connected in literature created by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors and illustrators (AC9E2LE01)
- Identify features of literary texts, such as characters and settings, and give reasons for personal preferences (AC9E2LE02)
- Create and edit literary texts by adapting structures and language features of familiar literary texts through drawing, writing, performance and digital tools (AC9E2LE05)

Literacy

- Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning (AC9E2LY05)
- Identifying the purpose of texts written by First Nations Australian authors (AC9E2LY03)

Hass

Geography

- The interconnections of First Nations Australians to a local Country/Place (AC9HS2K04)

Year 3

English

Language

- Identify how images extend the meaning of a text (AC9E3LA09)

Literature

- Discuss characters, events and settings in different contexts in literature by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors and illustrators (AC9E3LE01)
- Discuss connections between personal experiences and character experiences in literary texts and share personal preferences (AC9E3LE02)
- Discuss how an author uses language and illustrations to portray characters and settings in texts, and explore how the settings and events influence the mood of the narrative (AC9E3LE03)
- Create and edit imaginative texts, using or adapting language features, characters, settings, plot structures and ideas encountered in literary texts (AC9E3LE05)

Literacy

- Identifying the purpose of an imaginative text; for example, identifying the purpose of a fable (AC9E3LY03)
- Using phonic knowledge, word knowledge, vocabulary and grammatical knowledge to read unknown words (AC9E3LY04)
- Use comprehension strategies when listening and viewing to build literal and inferred meaning, and begin to evaluate texts by drawing on a growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features (AC9E3LY05)

Hass

Geography

- The ways First Nations Australians in different parts of Australia are interconnected with Country/Place (AC9HS3K04)

Links to the Australian Curriculum continued

Year 4

English

Language

- Using words encountered in texts that are formed from a First Nations Australian language (AC9E4LA11)

Literature

- Recognise similar storylines, ideas and relationships in different contexts in literary texts by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors (AC9E4LE01)
- Identifying how illustrations contribute to the meaning of stories by First Nations Australian authors AC9E4LE03

Literacy

- Identify the characteristic features used in imaginative, informative and persuasive texts to meet the purpose of the text (AC9E4LY03)
- Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning, to expand topic knowledge and ideas, and evaluate texts (AC9E4LY05)

Hass

History

- Exploring the connection of First Nations Australians to the land and water and how they manage these resources (AC9HS4K01)

Geography

- Explaining how people's connections with their environment can also be aesthetic, emotional and spiritual (AC9HS4K05)

Other books in the Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories Project series

- *Dwoort Baal Kaat*
- *Ngaawily Nop*
- *Noongar Mambara Bakitj*
- *Noorn*
- *Yira Boornak Nyininy*

All books are available to purchase online: uwap.uwa.edu.au/collections/wirlomin-noongar-language-and-stories-project