

Noongar Mambara Bakitj

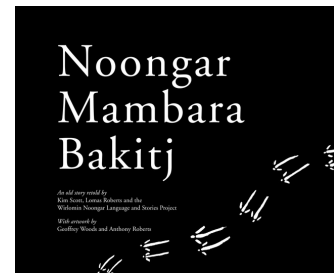
Retold by Kim Scott, Lomas Roberts and the Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories Project
 Illustrated by Geoffrey Woods and Anthony Roberts

Synopsis

When a young Noongar man follows a kangaroo track deep into the Old People's country, he encounters mambara, spirit creatures who give him permission to continue hunting. One mambara, however, becomes angry when the kangaroo is killed, challenging the man to a bakitj using boomerangs as weapons. Exhausted by the long fight, the Noongar is nonetheless able to defeat the spirit creature with the help of some magic he never knew he possessed.

Inspired by a 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.

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



ISBN: 978-1-74258-295-5

Themes

- First Nations Culture
 - Language - Noongar
 - Stories
 - Artwork
 - Spirituality
 - Ancestors
- Language Revival
- Community

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

Noongar Mambara Bakitj 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. Although a seemingly simple story, the subtleties in *Noongar Mambara Bakitj* reveal much about the Noongar and his connections with the Ancestors and mambara. 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 the text 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.
- Examine the illustrations before reading the written story. Using the illustrations, make predictions about the story. Compare your predictions with the story after reading.
- What is the significance of the Noongar man hunting without weapons? Why is this an important detail of the story?
- The kangaroo tracks are described as 'old and faint.' How does this reflect what else is happening in the story?
- Why do the spirit creatures say, 'old people come this way, but not for a long time'?
- How might the Noongar man have 'made sure the kangaroo never saw him'?
- Why do you think the Noongar man gives some of the kangaroo meat to the mambara?
- Why might the angry mambara be on his own rather than with the other spirit creatures?
- Why do you think the mambara is so angry? Will he continue to be angry after this episode? Use evidence to support your thinking.
- Retell this story from the role of either the Noongar man or one of the birds observing from the sky.

Study notes continued

- Using just the illustrations, share with a partner what is happening in this story.
- What is the connection between the Old People and the Noongar man? How does this story share the importance of Ancestors to First Nations cultures?
- Using evidence from the illustrations as a reference point, discuss whether the Noongar man is related to the mambara.
- With reference to the page opening below, discuss what happens to the Noongar man.



- How do projects such as *Noongar Mambara Bakitj* 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 *Noongar Mambara Bakitj*, re-read the illustrations in the text. How do they support and extend the storytelling? How do they help to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the text?
- What evidence is there in the text, both literal and implied, that the Noongar man has special abilities?
- Retell this story through a dramatic recreation, artwork, or shadow puppet play.
- Summarise *Noongar Mambara Bakitj* into a six-word story.
- The team behind this series says 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 *Noongar Mambara Bakitj* 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.

Study notes continued

- 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 *Noongar Mambara Bakitj*, 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)

Links to the Australian Curriculum continued

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)

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

Geography

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

Civics and Citizenship

- Investigating the customary lore of First Nations Australians and how it relates to people and places; for example, the lore covers rules of living, skin groups, broad roles of men and women, economic affairs, marriage and other activities (AC9HS4K07)
- recognising that the identity of First Nations Australians is shaped by Country/Place, language and knowledge traditions (AC9HS4K09)

Other books in the Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories Project series

- *Dwoort Baal Kaat*
- *Mamang*
- *Ngaawily Nop*
- *Noorn*
- *Yira Boornak Nyininy*

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