

TEACHERS' NOTES

PEMULWUY

— THE RAINBOW WARRIOR —

ERIC WILLMOT

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS:

English; Humanities and Social Sciences (Civics and Citizenship; Economics and Business)

VALUES: Tolerance, Self-Determination

Notes by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

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PLOT SUMMARY

'The legend of Pemulwuy is part of the belief system and oral history of the Aboriginal people of the east coast of Australia. It is also part of the history of all modern Australians. The city of Sydney is built upon his land.' (p 6)

This is the story of one of Australia's first true heroes. Pemulwuy. A proud and feared Aboriginal warrior, Pemulwuy leads an uncompromising twelve-year war against British colonial oppression and makes the supreme sacrifice in order to guide his people to safety.

Most histories of Australia start with the First Fleet and the hard times the colonists had with the climate and unruly convicts. Very few mention what really happened, or the blood that was spilled in the wars never spoken of. Pemulwuy, a Bidjigal man, unites the neighbouring peoples, runaway convicts, bushrangers and an escaped African known as Black Caesar, in a guerrilla war that pushes the invading English to the brink.

This novel was conceived out of Pemulwuy's legend and the historical events between 1788 and 1802. It is a story that all Australians should know.

Based closely on facts, it details the fictional story of Kiraban, one of the Awabakal people (p 17) and his first contact with European invaders and with Pemulwuy. He witnesses at first hand the impact of European presence in New South Wales and also the antipathy between Bennelong and Pemulwuy. The former held the view that 'The British can learn much from us and we have much to learn from them.' (p 25) Pemulwuy held a far less sanguine view and led a resistance to European invasion. His opponents resolutely refused to name him in official records in order to hide from their British masters the fact that they were engaged in a bitter conflict. Structured in three parts headed 'The First Part of Truth, the Second Part of Truth and the Third Part of Truth' this narrative is concerned to set the record straight and to resurrect Pemulwuy's history from the archives where it lay largely buried for two centuries.



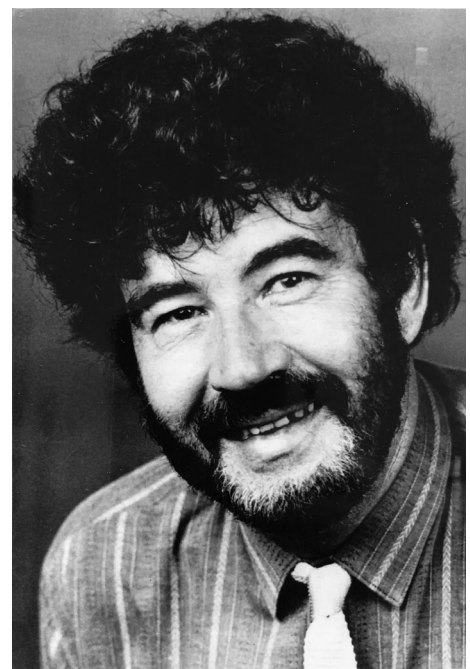
'On 22 November 1801 Governor King finally committed Pemulwuy's name to an official record. He was included in the Order outlawing Knight and Thrush. On that day Pemulwuy joined some interesting company among future Australians.' (p 324)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Eric Willmott AM (31/1/1936 – 20/4/2019) was for many years an authority on the life and times of Pemulwuy. He wrote the novel, *Pemulwuy: The Rainbow Warrior*, which was a landmark publication, a bestseller, and has been included in secondary and tertiary education curricula across Australia.

A visionary and a dreamer. A scholar, educator inventor and engineer, Eric was born in Queensland and spent his childhood on an island (Cribb Island) which no longer exists. He spent his youth as a drover, working in Queensland, New South Wales, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. He was one of those special Australians who lived close to the land and experienced the vision of this extraordinary continent, much of it from the back of a horse. At the age of 20, Eric was seriously injured in a rodeo accident and spent a year in hospital. During that period he studied for his matriculation, won a scholarship, and attended the University of Newcastle, where he took his first degree in science.

After working for a time in the Northern Territory, New South Wales and Papua New Guinea, Eric returned to Australia in the 1970s and followed a career in academia and public service. He was a lecturer at the University of Canberra, a Director of Research at the Australian National University, Principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, and Deputy Secretary in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.



Eric was one of Australia's leading educationists and was honoured by the Australian government for his contributions in that field with an AM. He became increasingly interested in indigenous education, which he viewed as the most important and intriguing part of Australian education. In 1980, he found that there were less than 100 university graduates of indigenous descent in Australia. Eric is known in Australian Aboriginal society as the main architect of the national education program begun in 1979, which aimed to produce 1000 graduates by 1990. In 1990 that program had produced 1800 graduates and transformed the society significantly.

Eric was Professor of Education and Head of the School of Education at James Cook University of North Queensland. He was then appointed Head of the ACT Schools Authority and later became the ACT Secretary (CEO) of the new Department of Education. In the early 1990s he was appointed Director General of Education in South Australia. He was a prominent member of the Australian Aboriginal community and served as chairman of the management committee for Aboriginal education programs at both the University of Queensland and at the University of Newcastle in New South Wales.

In 1986 Eric was invited to deliver the ABC Boyer Lectures. The Boyer Lectures is a series of talks by prominent Australians chosen by the ABC board to present ideas on major social, scientific or cultural issues. The title of Eric's Boyer Lectures was *Australia the Last Experiment*. This was a treatise on the nature and future prospects of the new mixed societies of Australia, New Zealand, USA and South Africa. This lecture series was highly acclaimed by critics and illustrated the extraordinary breadth of Eric's own research and interests.

Eric was twice invited to address the National Press Club in the ACT, he was a presenter in a film on Australian prehistory, *Trade Routes*, and was widely published in a number of disciplines, including anthropology and history. He made many radio broadcasts on a wide range of subjects, and in 1991 published his second fiction novel, *Below the Line*.

Eric took a renaissance approach to his career. He was also an engineer and prolific inventor. During his lifetime, Eric held over 90 international patents. These covered a range of technology from a continuously variable ratio transmission system to a helical skewer. In 1981 Eric was named Australian Inventor of the Year, and twice won the Médaille d'Or Genève of the Salon des Inventions in Geneva, Switzerland. The last position he held before retiring was Chief Engineer of Libwil Technology Pty Ltd.

Eric occupied positions on the boards of numerous statutory authorities and companies, and was a member of the Australian National Commission to UNESCO. Eric was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Laws from Melbourne University and a Doctorate Letters from Newcastle University.

WRITING STYLE

Title and Blurb

The book's title and cover might lead your students to form some perceptions of what the novel is likely to be about.



Activity: Discuss the perceptions they formed before, and then how they changed after reading the novel. Then design a new cover and write a blurb for the book.

Historical Fiction



Discussion Point: This work is based on fact but the character of Kiraban (Awabakal) is imagined. His part in this story allows the author to re-enact in a creative way some of the events which are not documented in order to create a cohesive narrative. How effective is this device, in your opinion?

Point of View and Narrative Perspective

This novel is written in third person, past tense, largely from an omniscient perspective.



Discussion Point: How might this narrative have differed if it had been written from a first person perspective? Imagine, for instance, if Kiraban had described any incident in the novel. Invite students to tell that story. James Cawley writes a letter home to his brother Gideon (pp 90–3) which provides a first person European perspective of the events described. How is his account coloured by his upbringing?

Descriptions of Landscape



Discussion Point: Description in this novel is emotively conveyed and often described from the perspective of the First Nations people reflecting on their landscape and the interventions of the foreigners. Choose a passage and what it reveals about Indigenous understanding of the land.

Similes, Metaphors and Other Literary Devices

The novelist makes use of poetic literary devices, for example, the opening paragraph of the novel:

'The pastel lake lay at ease on the evening tide. The streamers of the long Australian summer formed magic patterns about the little rocky islet of the moon. Kiraban stood at the mouth of the sea, his body forming a part of the shadowed headlands. He heard the voice of the sea, the cry of the birds, and now a strange clinking, knocking sound. This new sound came from the dark object which rested on the twilight waters at the lake's entrance. This, thought Kiraban, was the alien thing that had come from the sea.' (p 17)



Activity: Analyse this passage and then read the novel carefully and take note of and analyse other examples of such usage of devices.



Discussion Point: The chapter titles in this work are often very literary in reference: 'Of Mice and Men; A Fugue in Three Parts for Majors, Minors and Others'. This serves as an ironic commentary on this tale of conflict between Europeans and a non-European culture. Discuss any of the chapter titles and how they relate to the chapter's contents.

Humour



Discussion Point: Discuss the various humorous strategies available to a writer such as satire, irony, sarcasm, exaggeration, bathos, and black humour. For example, irony is used in the following: “*Er . . . I suppose he would, sir,*” said Carpenter. *For a scholar, Collins had a lot to learn.*’ (p 172) Locate any other examples of such strategies in this text.

Conflict and Suspense



Discussion Point: What other forms of conflict feature in this novel, apart from the major conflict between First Nations people and European invaders? For example, Bennelong and Pemulwuy have conflicting views about how to deal with the white invaders.



Discussion Point: What contributes to suspense in this novel?

Newspaper Feature Writing



Discussion Point: Many accounts of these early times rely on newspaper journalism. Research and discuss any records you can unearth in Trove <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/>> and discuss the views presented of any situation. Does it seem balanced or biased to you?

Characterisation

Main Characters

Kiraban (aka Awabakal), a member of the Awabakal people; Pemulwuy, a Bidjigal man; Tedbury, son of Pemulwuy; Koobee, a Kamergal man; Bennelong, a Bidjigal man; James (Jimmy) Cawley; a boy called Bungaree; a young Eora woman called Nargel (Narewe); Sean McDonough (Gurrewe), an escaped Irish convict; Lieutenant William Carpenter; Captain John Macarthur; the British Judge Advocate, Lieutenant David Collins; Bennelong; Governor Arthur Phillip; Major Robert Ross; Captain Watkin Tench; Lieutenant Marshall; Governor Captain John Hunter.



Discussion Point: Apart from Pemulwuy which of the main characters was most vividly drawn in your opinion?

Minor Characters

Baido, Kiraban’s countryman; Burrewan, a Kamergal man; Macintyre, the Governor’s gamekeeper; Ben Tilmouth and Mr Barrington, convicts working for Macintyre; Yennerawannie, a friend of Bennelong; Sergeant Smart; Djordwuy, leader of a group of Eora people at Broken Bay; Yenowee, Nanborree and Weuong, who accompany Pemulwuy in an attack; Milbab, Koobee’s wife; Nungee, a member of the Eora clan, and briefly a partner to Kiraban; Major Francis Grose, later Acting Governor; Captain Hill; Surgeon Balmain; Captain Abbott; Burungaroo, a knowledgeable Eora woman; Nanborree, a man betrothed to Nargel; Yella Mundi, an old Eora man; Boorea, Pemulwuy’s wife; Lieutenant Hamilton; Major Paterson; Black Caesar, an Afro-American at large in the bush; William Knight, an escaped convict; Coleleu, a friend of Nargel’s; Corporal Moore; Silky Donovan, a European woman living with the Eora; Boolayoo, Narewe and Gurrewe’s child; Governor Captain John Hunter; Sergeant Wilmot; Yerrinibee who married Goniana who had been promised to Bennelong; her sister Gnooroin, who was promised instead; Greville; Lieutenant Palmer; subalterns Lancing and Cowlshaw; Petty Officer James Thomas; Kenneth Wilson and Thomas Thrush, escaped convicts; Weuong; O’some; Reverend Marsden; Murrorong; Governor Philip Gidley King; Gomil; Captain Flinders.



Discussion Point: Which of the minor characters most intrigued you?

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Pemulwuy



Key Quote:

“We had in ancient Britain a warrior like Pemulwuy. A woman, called Boadicea. Hannibal and Vercingetorix were also great warriors, but Rome prevailed, as England, the new Rome, must. God, but history is brutal and filled with ironies.” (p 163)



Activity: Invite students to research the life of Pemulwuy using the resources contained in these notes as a starting point to their research. [See Further Reading.]



Discussion Point:

‘There are two things that set Pemulwuy apart from his later compatriots. The first was that he led the Eora people in the first major response to the British invasion, and fought the British for twelve long years until his death in 1802. The Aboriginal–Australian resistance is said to have been broken by Governor King in 1805 (Bridges 1920) when Pemulwuy’s son, Tedbury, was captured and became the first Australian prisoner of war. The second difference was the attitude of Pemulwuy’s enemies towards him. The British not only sought to destroy him physically, they, and some of their descendants, attempted to obliterate the very evidence of his existence. Until recently, Pemulwuy’s name has never appeared in any white Australian history, yet he lives on in the unpublished records of his enemies, and in the minds of Aboriginal–Australians.’ (pp 6–7)

Discuss this deliberate obliteration of Pemulwuy’s memory in official records.



Discussion Point: Resistance fighters are invariably described as either heroes or criminals. Pemulwuy was a dangerous opponent with fiercely protected ideals. Was he a hero?



Discussion Point: Pemulwuy’s connection to the supernatural was well-known, and he was referred to (by one Aboriginal actor) as a ‘Cleverman’ (p 7). Encourage students to watch and discuss the ABC series ‘Cleverman’ (2016–17) set in the present day, which deals with some of these concepts in a creative fictional way. How are these two ‘Clevermen’ the same or different from each other?



Discussion Point:

‘The Australian casualties from armed combat and sickness throughout the period must have been enormous, because the entire Eora nation was destroyed.’ (p 11)

Pemulwuy was one of the Bidjigal, a member of the Eora people of the area surrounding Botany Bay. Research the history of the Eora.



Discussion Point:

Many early invaders took a ‘scientific’ interest in First Nations people. ‘Tench had told him that the Judge Advocate was keen to gain recognition in British learned circles for his first-hand studies of the New South Wales primitives.’ (p 172)

This sort of thinking led to Pemulwuy’s remains being taken to the UK. There is a campaign to return Pemulwuy’s remains to Australia. Research this campaign and the progress that has been made.



Discussion Point: A choral work about Pemulwuy was commissioned and written by composer Paul Jarman, and first performed in 2006. Students may wish to watch a performance at the Pemulwuy National Male Voice Festival in 2011 which was conducted by Chris Kiver available here: ‘Pemulwuy’ *Paul Jarman* <<http://www.pauljarman.com/composition/pemulwuy/> > Pemulwuy’s reputation is also being celebrated currently with a movie in development with Stan Grant and Phillip Noyce as Executive Producers. A musical/theatrical production is also in development. What makes his story so very relevant to audiences and so potent today?



Discussion Point: Research other early resistance fighters such as Jagan (Yagan), Tongerlongeter or Jandamarra (Jundamurra), or prominent First Nations figures such as Bennelong, Colbee (Koobee in this novel), Arabanu, Mathinna and Truganini.



Discussion Point: Pemulwuy’s skills in bating the British are revealed (p 40) when he refuses to give the party led by Macintyre and Smart any information about the missing convict. His mocking usage of their own phraseology reveals his intelligence and skill in adopting their language. His actions present a contrast to how Bennelong mimics those he wishes to ingratiate himself to: ‘*Bennelong paused thoughtfully, pulled a handkerchief from the pocket of his britches and dabbed his forehead as he had seen so many British do.*’ (p 54) Compare the two men and their interactions with European invaders.



Discussion Point:

“Bennelong and his kind are of little account, you know. If we are to have New South Wales, we must beat Pemulwuy. He is the soul of the native resistance. Break him and we break them all.”

“But how, sir?” asked Carpenter.

Tench responded with a wintry smile. “If I knew that,” he said, “I would have done it, Mr Carpenter.” (p 84)

What made Pemulwuy such a fearsome opponent?

Colonial Invasion and Early Contact with First Nations People



Key Quote:

‘The British called this place Sydney. He knew this immediately to be a name given by the strangers, because of the hissing sound at the beginning of the word. The place was full of different people from the surrounding districts. It was the country of the Borogegal. He found that there were also Karegal, Kamergal, Kadigal, Gweagal and even some of the taller Bidjigal and Dharug people.’ (p 23)

The British named this place and presumed the local inhabitants, the Eora, were one people. But Kiraban’s reflections reveal the complexity of the tribal groups living there.



Discussion Point: Discuss how the Europeans’ wilful ignorance of tribal borders eventually led to a decimation of Eora cultures.



Activity: Read other fiction texts and picture books on the treatment of First Nations people by European invaders in relation to the theme as it is canvassed in this novel. [See Further Reading for resources.]



Discussion Point: Misunderstandings between First Nations people and the European invaders were common. For example, they refer to their first sight of European ships as ‘*alien sea things*’ and ‘*sea islands*’ (p 17).

- *'Kiraban found that the problem with all of this was that, with the exception of a few, the aliens were rather dour people. They did not appreciate the local style of humour, and in fact, hardly any of them could tolerate themselves being the object of a joke. This led to quite a bit of bad feeling between the two groups.'* (p 24)
- Interpreting First Nations languages was also problematic for the Europeans:
The aliens clearly did not understand the way these people used names, and it was not worth the effort of trying to explain. So Kiraban became Awabakal to the British. Worse still, the other Eora also fell into using this name. The joke among the other young men now was, "Awabakal, the man who has the same name as his tongue." (p 24)
There was also a misunderstanding regarding the interpretation of the words 'Eora' and 'Koori'.
- *'Kiraban had observed that the aliens seemed to have a society which was divided into two kinds of people. One group wore clothes of stunning colours, the other wore drab coverings and were often tied together with metal links. This group was made to work for the colourful people. If they refused, they were scolded or beaten. This was certainly strange behaviour, but most of the Eora put it down to some primitive part of the culture of their strange visitors. The concept of prison or incarceration was incredible to Eora people. Older Eora said that the constant practice of such physical violence must be some sort of cure or initiation rite. The flogging, however, was an event beyond any of the Eoras' imagination.'* (p 25)
- Mathematics was a different concept for the two peoples (p 50).
- Differing concepts of land ownership were discussed by Cawley and Kiraban (pp 36–7).
- Notions of class were puzzling to the Eora people:
Nargel found British society to be governed by very different rules. Those relating to mating and sexual association seemed variable. The predominant order of the society seemed to depend on dividing people into one of two groups. These two groups acted like completely different peoples. They spoke the same language, but the actual nature of the relationship between the groups was well beyond Nargel's understanding. McDonough was one of the category of aliens called convicts, who had to work for the others. Nargel also learned that he was of the ethnic variety called Irish, although he did speak English. The ethnic mix and languages among the aliens was puzzling to the Eora people. Many Eoras regarded the newcomers as spirit beings and did not expect to find so many of the trappings of normal human beings among them. (p 64)

Invite students to draw up a list of the differences between the First Nations and European people.



Discussion Point: Another aspect of early interactions was that separate clan groups were thrust into contact with each other, leading to disputes and conflicts. For example, Bennelong hates Pemulwuy (p 55) and advises Phillip to take action against him. They have vastly different views as were expressed earlier when Bennelong chides Kiraban:

'Bennelong made no secret of the fact that he believed the British arrival to be a great and important happening among his people. Bennelong considered the event an awakening. One day he scolded Kiraban for joining with some others in baiting the aliens with language jokes. "You should help the British to learn our languages, not torment them when they try," he said. Yennerawannie, a friend of Bennelong's, took Kiraban by the arm and said, "Awabakal! You should listen to what Bennelong says. The British can learn much from us and we have much to learn from them.' (p 25)

How destructive was such internal squabbling amongst these various tribal groups?



Discussion Point: The following distasteful sentence indicates that European motives were not always honest when dealing with First Nations people:

Grose looked out of the window and across Sydney Cove. He could see the small cottage that Phillip had had built for Bennelong on the point. A kennel for the Governor's tame nigger, he thought sourly. Except that the tame nigger was no longer doing his job by keeping the natives quiet.
(p 70)

Was Bennelong deliberately duped by his patrons? What was the ultimate outcome of Bennelong's patronage by the Europeans?



Discussion Point: Phillip invites Bennelong and his friend Yennerawannie to travel with him on his return to England. Research the outcomes of this ill-fated journey from which Yennerawannie did not return.



Discussion Point: Although transportation destroyed many convicts' lives for some it offered opportunity as well:

Barrington had about him a presence of calculating intelligence. He dealt carefully with Macintyre, but found it hard at times to conceal his contempt for his "master". Barrington was a transported pickpocket, who was finding that the colony of New South Wales held a promise he had never found in the slums of London. This man Macintyre was his ticket to freedom. (p 31)

Discuss the fate of some early convicts by researching first hand accounts.



Discussion Point: Is racism inherent or a learned character flaw? How important is education in encouraging inclusive approaches to others?



Discussion Point:

'There was no more rage now. Narewe had found her own truth to it all. In her womb a child moved and it would live after Pemulwuy and the British were long dead.' (p 165)

Despite the decline of the Eora people does this quote strike a note of hope for the future?



Discussion Point:

This was indeed a conspiracy of silence. The same that was applied to Pemulwuy's resistance. It was apparently not in the interests of a crookedly intent or racist establishment to promote such parts of the Australian story. If this is true, then these people have stolen from generations of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal-Australians a heritage as important, as tragic and as heroic as that of any other nation on earth. (pp 13–14)

History lies in the hands of those who record it. Debates about this led to the 'culture wars' of the 1990s and to Prime Minister John Howard's quoting historian Geoffrey Blainey's phrase 'black armband school of history' (1993), in 1996, to 'profoundly reject such criticism of those who would resurrect the history of Indigenous dispossession'. Discuss.



Discussion Point: Read other fiction which explores the colonial impact on First Nations people and discuss in relation to this novel.

Frontier Conflicts



Key Quote:

Awabakal marked the ground with his finger, then said, "I have watched Yanada these nights and I know what our secret truth must be." He paused. "Over all these summers we have learned that there are many ways to win wars." Pemulwuy climbed down to the ground. "To win a war, Kiraban," he said, "you must make someone lose."

"It is not even war," said Awabakal. "It is just killing people."

"Ah, but it is war, Kiraban."

"Then, if it is war, we must lose." "Only if we fight, Kiraban," said Pemulwuy. (p 334)



Discussion Point: Major Ross's report outlining possible strategies for avoiding conflict and shoring up British defences and land for farming (pp 25–8) indicates that their opponents were gifted military strategists who demanded skilled opposition. Discuss.



Discussion Point:

Pemulwuy added. "I have noticed that when a man has a musket, he will not fire it until he can see his target and aim. This is not good. A trained warrior with a spear throws . . ."

"By instinct," Gurrewe helped him.

"Yes. He does not need to see like a musket soldier needs to see." (p 146)

This is one of the many examples in the novel of the almost superhuman skills possessed by these Aboriginal warriors. Discuss.



Discussion Point:

His twelve-year campaign and persistent attacks on crops and towns were well beyond the acts of outlaws or thieves. They were acts of war, carried out by a people who were determined not to surrender their land or sovereignty to an invader. (p 7)

Many people still today refuse to describe 'settlement' as 'invasion' and deny the reality of Frontier Conflicts and wars. Why is the use of these alternate words so contentious?



Discussion Point: Bennelong discovers the plot which has been denied by Macarthur, the use of the introduced illness smallpox:

"So. Did he actually use the word 'smallpox'?" asked Macarthur.

"No," moaned Bennelong. "He used galgalla. It's an Eora word, but it means the same thing."

Macarthur nodded solemnly. "Bennelong," he said, "I can only assure you that I have had nothing to do with any plan to infect your people. You must believe me on that score." (p 220)

How did introduced illnesses exacerbate the conflict?



Discussion Point:

'And so, gradually, almost helplessly, the colony drifted towards a strange, undeclared Anglo-Australian war.' (p 56)

This statement challenges those who would assert that First Nations people's responses to Europeans were unprovoked. Discuss the concept of a 'frontier war'.



Discussion Point:

'Collins walked slowly back towards his own house, pondering on what Marshall had told him, realising that he had found a very good reason why Hunter's underlings were playing down the native resistance.' (p 352)

What reason has Collins realised here?



Discussion Point:

Little by little he drew the main picture of the situation from Awabakal.

Finally Flinders said, "So you think you have lost a war! My dear fellow, the Rum Corps has never let you fight one. Whatever happens, it is the Corps who have lost. They lost when they made your leader an outlaw."

"I don't understand," said Awabakal.

"Well, sir, even if they succeed in killing the man, they are simply executing an outlaw, not winning a war. There is no conquest," Flinders answered. He stopped and thought for a minute. "It is an unfortunate situation and, mark my words, the future will be held to pay the debt." (p 329)

Discuss Flinders' analysis of the conflict.

First Nations Spiritual Beliefs

Key Quote: "Their song echoed faintly across the valley, absorbing the haunting beauty of the place. It assured the beings, creators and created in the painting, that the eternal permanence of this land was maintained." (p 34)



Discussion Point:

The Eora people, for example, associated the symbol of the serpent with the transcendental creator, whereas Christians associated this creature with evil spirits and devils. (p 106)

Research the First Nations beliefs associated with the serpent.



Discussion Point:

The problem was that Christians believed that the spiritual component of the human being contained the entire personality. It was the soul. After death, this spiritual entity persisted and was rewarded or punished. McDonough found that the Eora believed that the human personality was contained in the synthesis of spiritual and mortal parts. The spirit did persist beyond death, but it did not contain the personality of the deceased person. (p 106)

Other forms of Indigenous spirituality include the following:

Nargel's song had developed into a definite chant by the time she stood under the southern stars. Those stars seemed to reach down and touch her and carry her lament into the wind. (p 243);

"But Pemulwuy is most certainly alive!" Bennelong's eyes were hooded as he stared at the Englishman. "For you, for the British, perhaps he is not. Perhaps for you he is dead, not a human being. Perhaps that is why you cannot mention his name. Because for you he must be dead. How can he live for you?" (p 255);

Pemulwuy buries Narewe and others in a ritualised manner (p 321).

What other examples of their spiritual beliefs did you take note of?



Discussion Point: Mundi's story of Yanada (pp 131–3) is an example of a Dreamtime story. Read some picture books based on such stories and discuss with students the beliefs reflected in them.



KEY QUOTES

Choose one of the following quotes and discuss in relation to the themes which have been outlined above. Then write an essay on how this quote relates to the overall themes in this novel.

1. *He had learned another important fact about the aliens. The language they spoke was called “English” yet they called themselves “British”. This word, Kiraban imagined, meant the same as the Awabakal word Koori, which referred more generally to people. Later he found out that this was not quite correct. (p 21)*
2. *It became great entertainment among the younger men to make fun of the strangers’ attempts to master the local languages. (p 24)*
3. *The concept of prison or incarceration was incredible to Eora people. Older Eora said that the constant practice of such physical violence must be some sort of cure or initiation rite. (p 25)*
4. *Over the weeks Kiraban had become aware that Bennelong was antagonistic towards him. This antagonism, he realised, arose from the fact that Bennelong believed the British belonged to the Eora people. Thus he did not wish them to become friendly with the Awabakals or any other nearby group. This sense of the British being a “possession” had become a matter of great personal importance for Bennelong, such that he was even unhappy about the trading relationship which existed between Pemulwuy and a somewhat shady character among the British known as Macintyre. (p 27)*
5. *For the first time Kiraban saw a European read from a book. He didn’t really understand what he was saying, but he had heard much talk about this reading thing among the Eora in Sydney. (p 37)*
6. *“Er . . . on that matter, Mr Macarthur,” Ross said with a frown, “I must remind you that the local population is under the protection of British law and that any untoward acts committed against natives will be regarded rather unfavourably by the Colonial Office.”
“It is a matter of apprehending a criminal, sir!” (p 54)*
7. *In an unexpected way, he now understood an important principle in attaining manhood of the Eora: the pain of the body can be used to relieve pain of the mind. (p 46)*
8. *Pemulwuy peered intensely at McDonough. “The British have brought your body here, but I think that they kept your head in Ireland.” McDonough looked thoughtfully for a minute. “Perhaps I have the edge of what you’re saying,” he said. “But I can assure you . . . you have little understanding of the Irish.” Pemulwuy laughed. “Do the Irish have a great understanding of the Irish?” Jesus, but it was worse than at home. McDonough stood up and turned away. He had more to do, he thought, than chat with a one-eyed black philosopher. (p 71)*
9. *This was not the New South Wales he had imagined when the fleet had set sail from Portsmouth almost four years before. His information had been that the natives were hopelessly backward, without ideas of nationhood, property, military organisation or warfare. Phillip was a naval officer, and he had been prepared to organise a gaol for his masters in London. What he had not reckoned with was such a strange war of conquest. (p 82)*
10. *“He writes as though the Bidjigal own this land — as if, whatever nefarious acts they may commit, we dare not offend them!” Macarthur glowered at Grose. “These natives wander over it, that is all, occasionally killing and eating the primitive creatures that dwell upon it.” (p 128)*
11. *“No, Marshall,” said Awabakal. “It’s true what Pemulwuy says. You’re not trying to live with us. You’re just trying to steal our land. If you take our land we will all die anyway. We must die fighting you for it.” (p 150)*
12. *There was growing anxiety that Phillip, known to be making mischief in the corridors of power in London, might encourage the British government to despatch another regiment of troops to the colony, breaking their military and economic monopoly. The prospect was horrifying. It could even end in American-type treaties with the natives! If there was one thing on which they agreed, it was that New South Wales should be viewed as Terra Nullius, a country in which no-one had exercised sovereignty or owned land before the British had arrived. The Terra Nullius doctrine, based on the (to alien eyes) hopelessly primitive native way of life, treated Australia in all practical terms as an uninhabited continent.’(p 169)*
13. *“I find it quite extraordinary,” he said slowly. “This business of Pemulwuy. I have been attempting to find out more of the details of his rise to notoriety. But, God help me, there’s not a single mention of the man’s name in any official*

records I can lay my hands on.” Paterson looked at his superior and smiled warily. “I see, sir . . .” He left the sentence hanging. And yet he has been involved in the affairs of the colony for almost ten years,” Hunter pressed on. “And, he has been an active opponent of our interests for at least eight of those . . .” He made a languid gesture of disgust. “There has been something of a conspiracy of silence.” (p 247)

14. The Governor did his best to look busy, but Bennelong simply stood quietly before him and eventually Hunter had to ask him to sit down. They were an interesting pair, these two: if there was a competition for losers in the Australian adventure, it might well be won by one or the other of them. (p 309)
15. In mid-September Pemukwy left his group and walked to his secret place. A dreaming site of his father’s. The site was not very imposing. It lay on the side of a hill in a sandstone outcrop. This site had been continuously maintained by Pemukwy’s paternal line for thousands of years. Pemukwy entered a small, shallow cave. Its walls had been marked by men so distant and mysterious in their antiquity that the question of what the marks were never crossed Pemukwy’s mind. Pemukwy touched the rock walls with his fingertips, closed his eyes and sang a soft, melodious chant. The cave slowly filled with the song, which deepened in timbre. The song floated down to the face of the rise and fulfilled its meaning and purpose. Its meaning was the land: as it had always been. Its purpose was renewal: renewal of the spiritual communion of the Eora people and this land their source. (p 319)

FURTHER READING

Picture Books

Some picture books may be used with older readers as a catalyst for discussion:

- Bancroft, Bronwyn *Remembering Lionsville* Allen & Unwin, 2013.
Dreise, Gregg *Common Wealth* Scholastic, 2021.
Dreise, Gregg *Awesome Emu* Magabala Books, 2021.
Greenwood, Mark *Jandamarra* Illustrated by Terry Denton. Allen & Unwin, 2013.
Greenwood, Mark *Boomerang and Bat* Illustrated by Terry Denton. Allen & Unwin, 2016.
Kwaymullina, Ambelin *Living on Stolen Land* Magalaba Books, 2020.
Pryor, Boori Monty *Shake a Leg* Illustrated by Jan Ormerod. Allen & Unwin, 2016.
Pryor, Boori Monty *Story Doctors* Illustrated by Rita Sinclair. Allen & Unwin, 2021.
Roach, Archie *Took the Children Away* with illustrations by Ruby Hunter. Simon & Schuster, 2020.
Mayor, Thomas *Finding Our Heart* Illustrated by Blak Douglas. Hardie Grant Travel, 2020.
McQuire, Amy *Daybreak* Illustrated by Matt Chun. Little Hare Books, Hardie Grant, 2021.
Murphy, Aunty Joy *Welcome to Country* Illustrated by Lisa Kennedy. Walker Books, 2016.
Murphy, Aunty Joy and Kelly, Andrew *Wilam: a Birrarung Story*. Illustrated by Lisa Kennedy. Walker Books, 2019.
Sedunary, Michael *The Unlikely Story of Bennelong and Phillip* Artwork by Bern Emmerichs. Berbay Books, 2015.

Fiction For Older Readers

* Several titles marked below are published for adults so that teachers are advised to consider content before employing them in the classroom.

Several titles marked below are by Non-Indigenous authors.

- *Behrendt, Larissa *Home* UQP, 2004.
- *Behrendt, Larissa *Legacy* UQP, 2009.
- *Behrendt, Larissa *After Story* UQP, 2021.
- *Birch, Tony *The White Girl* UQP, 2019.
- *Birch, Tony *Ghost River* UQP, 2015.
- *Birch, Tony *Blood* UQP, 2011.
- *Birch, Tony *Common People* UQP, 2017.

#French, Jackie *Nanberry: Black Brother White* HarperCollins, 2011.
 #French, Jackie *The Secret of the Black Bushranger* (The Secret History Series) HarperCollins, 2017.
 #French, Jackie *Birring the Secret Friend* (The Secret History Series) HarperCollins, 2015.
 #French, Jackie *Tom Appleby: Convict Boy* HarperCollins, 2004.
 Fuller, Lisa *Ghost Bird* UQP, 2019.
 #*Grenville, Kate *The Secret River* (Historical Trilogy, Book 1) Text Publishing, 2005.
 # *Grenville, Kate *The Lieutenant* (Historical Trilogy, Book 2) Text Publishing, 2010.
 #*Grenville, Kate *Sarah Thornhill* (Historical Trilogy, Book 3) Text Publishing, 2014.
 #Gwynne, Phillip *Deadly, Unna?* Penguin Books, 1998.
 #Gwynne, Phillip *Nukkin Ya* Penguin Books, 2000.
 Harrison, Jane *Becoming Kirrali Lewis* Magabala Books, 2015.
 Heiss, Anita *Our Race for Reconciliation* (My Australian Story) Scholastic, 2017.
 Heiss, Anita *Who Am I?* (My Australian Story) New Edition Scholastic, 2020.
 *Heiss, Anita *Bila Yarrudhangalangdhuray* Simon & Schuster, 2021.
 Kwaymullina, Ambelin and Kwaymullina, Ezekiel *Catching Teller Crow* Allen & Unwin, 2018.
 Kwaymullina, Ambelin *The Tribe Trilogy* (Boxed Set) Walker Books, 2021.
 Lonesborough, Gary *The Boy from the Mish* Allen & Unwin, 2021.
 Loughnan, Kathleen *Shauna's Great Expectations* Allen & Unwin, 2019.
 *Lucashenko, Melissa *Too Much Lip* UQP, 2018.
 *Lucashenko, Melissa *Mullumbimby* UQP, 2013.
 McPherson, Sue *Grace Beside Me* Magabala Books, 2012.
 Morgan, Sally *Sister Heart* Fremantle Press, 2015.
 *Scott, Kim *That Deadman Dance* Pan Macmillan, 2010.
 *Scott, Kim *Taboo* Pan Macmillan, 2017.
 *Scott, Kim *Benang: from the Heart* Fremantle Press, 1999.
 #*Silvey, Craig *Jasper Jones* Allen & Unwin, 2009.
 Thomas, Jared *Songs that Sound Like Blood* Magabala Books, 2016.
 Thomas, Jared *Calypso Summer* Magabala Books, 2014.
 *Van Neerven, Ellen *Heat and Light* UQP, 2014.
 *Winch, Tara June *The Yield* Penguin Random House, 2019.
 *Winch, Tara June *Swallowing the Air* UQP, 2003.
 *Wright, Alexis *Carpentaria* Giramondo Publishing, 2006.

ANTHOLOGIES

Flock: First Nations Stories Then and Now edited by Ellen van Neerven. UQP, 2021.
Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia Edited by Anita Heiss. Black Inc, 2018.
Remembering by Heart: an Anthology of Indigenous Writing Foreword by Sally Morgan.
 Fremantle Press, 2014.
maar bidi; next generation black writing edited by Linda Martin and Elfie Shiosaki. Magabala Books, 2020.
Macquarie Pen Anthology of Aboriginal Literature edited by Anita Heiss and Peter Minter. Allen & Unwin, 2008.
Writing Black: New Indigenous Writing from Australia edited by Ellen van Neerven. black&write!
 Indigenous writing and editing project at the State Library of Queensland, 2014.

NON-FICTION

Note: This book was first published in 1987 so the Bibliography contains dates from that time. Hence many recent texts might also be studied such as those below:

Broome, Richard *Aboriginal Australians: a history since 1788*. Fifth Edition. Allen & Unwin, 2019, 1982.
 Clendinnen, Inga *Dancing with Strangers* (Text Classics) Text Publishing, 2017, 2003.
 Collins, David *A Voyage to new South Wales* with Governor Phillip edited with an introduction and notes by John Currey. Banks Society at the Colony Press, 2006.

- Currey, John *David Collins: a Colonial Life* Melbourne University Press, 2000.
- Grant, Stan *Talking to my Country* HarperCollins, 2016.
- Grant, Stan *Australia Day* HarperCollins, 2019.
- Grassby, Al *The Tyranny of Prejudice* AE Press, 1984.
- Himkson, Melinda *Aboriginal Sydney: a guide to important places of the past and present*. Photography by Alana Harris. Aboriginal Studies Press, 2010, 2001.
- Keneally, Thomas *The Commonwealth of Thieves: the Sydney Experiment* Random House, 2005.
- Langton, Marcia *Welcome to Country* (Youth Edition) Explore Australia, 2019.
- Morgan, Sally *My Place* Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2010, 1987.
- Newbury, Paul W., ed. *Aboriginal Heroes of the Resistance; from Pemulwuy to Mabo* Action for World Development, 1999.
- Pryor, Boori Monty and McDonald, Meme *Maybe Tomorrow* Allen & Unwin, 2010.
- Pybus, Cassandra *Truganini: Journey through the apocalypse* Allen & Unwin, 2020.
- Roach, Archie *Tell Me Why for Young Adults* Simon & Schuster, 2021.
- Reynolds, Henry *Why Weren't We Told?* Penguin Books, 2000.
- Reynolds, Henry *Truth-Telling: History, sovereignty and the Uluru Statement* NewSouth, 2021.
- Reynolds, Henry and Clements, Nicholas, *Tongerlongeter; First Nations Leader and Tasmanian War Hero* NewSouth, 2021.
- Tench, Watkin *Watkin Tench's 1788* (Text Classics) Text Publishing, 2012.
- Smith, Keith Vincent *Bennelong: The coming in of the Eora, Sydney Cove 1788-1792* Kangaroo Press/Simon & Schuster, 2001.
- Woorunmurra, Banjo and Pedersen, Howard *Jandamarra and the Bunuba Resistance: A True Story* Magabala Books, 2016.
- Wright, Alexis *Tracker* Giramondo Publishing, 2017.

FURTHER RESOURCES FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

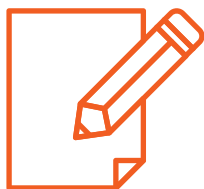
INTERNET RESOURCES

- 'Arabanoo' *Wikipedia* <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabanoo>>
- Auchmuty, J.C. 'Hunter, John (1737-1821)' *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Volume 1, 1966 online in 2006 <<https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hunter-john-2213>>
- 'Cleverman' *Wikipedia* <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cleverman>>
- Dale, David 'We could name Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse and Geronimo, but none of us had heard of Pemulwuy' *The Sydney Morning Herald* August 7, 2019 <<https://www.smh.com.au/national/we-could-name-sitting-bull-crazy-horse-and-geronimo-but-none-of-us-had-heard-of-pemulwuy-20190807-p52eug.html>>
- 'Eora Mapping Aboriginal Sydney 1770 to 1850' *State library of NSW* <<https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/stories/eora>>
- Eora People: Saltwater people of the Sydney area <<https://www.eorapeople.com.au/>>
- Fletcher, B. H. 'Phillip, Arthur (1738-1814)' *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Volume 2, 1967 online in 2006 <<https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/phillip-arthur-2549>>
- Groves, Don 'Pemulwuy biopic will salute an Indigenous hero' *IF Magazine* August 15, 2019 <<https://www.if.com.au/pemulwuy-biopic-will-salute-an-indigenous-hero/#:~:text=To%20his%20direct%20descendants%20and,a%20patriot%20and%20a%20warrior>>
- 'Indigenous Australians: Pemulwuy: A Resistance Hero' *First People Then and Now* <<https://firstpeoplethenandnow.com/indigenous-australians-pemulwuy-a-resistance-hero/first-people-then-and-now/>>
- Jandamarra* <<http://www.jandamarra.com.au/jandamarratheman.html>>
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 <<https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/movies/we-need-to-hear-about-our-own-heroes-indigenous-warrior-film-being-made-20190725-p52as2.html>>
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 <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-01/the-story-of-aboriginal-resistance-warrior-pemulwuy/12202782>>
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 <https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/RP9798/98RP05#ORIGINS>
- 'Mathinna (Tasmanian)' *Wikipedia* <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathinna_\(Tasmanian\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathinna_(Tasmanian))>
- 'New South Wales Corps' *Wikipedia* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_South_Wales_Corps>
- 'On this day: Pemulwuy is killed' *Australian Geographic* June 1, 2017
 <<https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/blogs/on-this-day/2017/06/on-this-day-pemulwuy-is-killed/>>
- 'Pemulwuy' *My Place* for Teachers <https://www.myplace.edu.au/decades_timeline/1800/decade_landing_20.html?tabRank=2&subTabRank=2> [From Television series based on classic picture book by Nadia Wheatley and Donna Rawlins (1987) about Australian multicultural historical evolution.]
- 'Pemulwuy' *National Museum of Australia* <<https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/pemulwuy>>
- 'Pemulwuy' *Monument Australia* ?
 <<https://www.monumentaustralia.org.au/themes/people/indigenous/display/105945-pemulwuy/>>
- 'Pemulwuy' *Paul Jarman* <<http://www.pauljarman.com/composition/pemulwuy/>>
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 <https://www.bayside.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/2016_HighSchool_Purvis_Cindy.pdf>
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright AM operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011 she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland, and in 2012 the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Australia. In 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award. In 2021 she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia. She is President of IBBY Australia and Deputy-Chair of the Australian Children's Laureate Foundation. In 2021 she was appointed a Member of the Order to Australia.



WORKSHEETS

WORKSHEET – COMPREHENSION

Ask students to answer the following ten questions:

1. *Who was Gurrewe?*
2. *What was the name of Pemulwuy's first wife?*
3. *Where did Black Caesar come from?*
4. *What group of the Eora was Pemulwuy?*
5. *Which other Indigenous man travels with Bennelong and Captain Arthur Phillip to England?*
6. *Who became Governor of New South Wales after Captain John Hunter?*
7. *Later in the novel, John Macarthur opens up new territory and calls it what?*
8. *Who was the influential Church of England minister who arrived in Sydney in 1794?*
9. *Kamay was known by the aliens by what name?*
10. *The New South Wales Marine Corps were commonly called what?*

Answers: 1. An escaped Irish convict named Sean McDonough. 2. Boorea. 3. He was an Afro-American who had escaped a whaling vessel to become a bushranger and later a resistance figure with Pemulwuy's followers. 4. Bidjigal people. 5. Yennerawannie. 6. Captain Philip Gidley King. 7. Camden. 8. Reverend Samuel Marsden. 9. Botany Bay. 10. The Rum Corps.

WORKSHEET – FURTHER ACTIVITIES & QUESTIONS

- What else has Eric Willmot written? Investigate information and reviews of his work online.
- What other works deal with the issue of First Nations rights and culture? [Use the Further Reading list above as a start in compiling a reading list.]
- How would you describe Pemulwuy?
- Invite your students to investigate the life of any other historical figure who features in this narrative.
- Encourage creative responses to the themes in this novel. eg You might wish to write a song about the events it contains; or to create a comic panel based on one of the scenes in this book.
- Write a review of this novel, after studying the conventions of review writing.
- Read the first chapter again, once you have read the entire work. How had your reading of it changed?
- Why did the author choose to fictionalise this text?
- How would you describe James Cawley?
- What might become of Narewe and Gurrewe's child, Boolayoo, sent to school in Sydney?