



“The Stolen Generations”

The Nowhere People

A Learning Activity – English and History

Summary:

These lesson ideas are aimed at developing empathy for the members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait community who have struggled with questions of identity due to the forced removal of themselves or their forebears. This material meets the Australian Curriculum Cross Curriculum Priority of studying “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures”. It also address specific requirements of the History and English curriculum and the Catholic Religious Education Standards. Curriculum Links:

Cross-Curriculum Priorities: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

Country and Place:

- * OI.2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities maintain a special connection to and responsibility for Country / Place throughout all of Australia
- * OI.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have unique belief systems and are spiritually connected to the land, sea, sky and waterways

Culture:

- * OI.5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ ways of life are uniquely expressed through ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing.



“I believe that there are several ways to find your totem animal. You can have an animal given to you by an elder, you can discover it yourself or it will one day somehow find you and open the doors for you to learn other things about yourself. I believe that Betty found her totem” (Richard Frankland)

Australian Curriculum

- At **Foundation Year**, students will have a chance to explore family structures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, where children belong to extended families in which there are specific roles and responsibilities to ensure safety and wellbeing
- At **Foundation Year**, when looking at how the stories of families and the past can be communicated, students will learn how to engage with the oral traditions, and will learn about the painting and music of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, recognising that the past is communicated through stories passed down from generation to generation
- In **Year 9**, under **Making of the Modern World / Making a Nation**, the effects of European settlement in Australia on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the forcible removal of children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century (leading to the Stolen Generations), the motivations for the removal of children, the practices and laws that were in place, and experiences of separation will be investigated

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“...stories work as extended metaphors and are an appropriate method for leading one to ponder the deeper things in life. They are products of the creative imagination ...

.. myths and parables are based on and draw from lived experiences and can ... be termed ‘autobiographical’...”

Year 8 English:

- Explore the interconnectedness of Country and Place, People, Identity and Culture in texts including those by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors
- **Create imaginative**, informative and persuasive texts that raise issues, report events and advance opinions, using deliberate language and textual choices, and including digital elements as appropriate
- **Experiment with text structures and language features to refine and clarify ideas to improve the effectiveness of students’ own texts**

Religious Education Standards

- * **Year 7** The study of world and religious religions
- * **Year 10** The study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Spirituality
- * **VCE Unit 1 Outcome 3** Recognise and discuss the interplay between the identity of members, as individuals or as specific communities, and their religious tradition

Lesson options:

FOUNDATION LEVEL - and could be extended to produce an extended myth by YEAR 8 ENGLISH

- 1. Read the story to the children. Have photocopies of the pictures in the book. Working in pairs the students must put the pictures in the order of the narrative.**
- 2. Have a discussion focussing on the what the platypus' problem was and how the problem was solved.**
- 3. In discussion identify why the platypus was sad and then what made the platypus happy.**
- 4. The teacher explains how these feelings were felt by Betty Pike in her life, linking her to the platypus.**
- 5. Present the students with a choice of ten Australian animals: kangaroo, emu, echidna, galah, lizard, possum, turtle, shark, eagle, koala. They must choose one of these animals that might be like them - draw the animal - and then find 4 words that describe the animal.**
- 6. The students take their photos using their computers and create a display that has their picture with their animal and the key words they have discovered.**

- Older students could:

- a) research Aboriginal languages for the word for their animal**
- b) Write a myth in which their animal must solve a problem**
- c) Research another Aboriginal myth**

Year 9

1. The students be introduced to the “Bringing Them Home” report

<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/bringing-them-home-stolen-children-report-1997>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXx3XBHNzxk>

2. The students compare the statement by Richard Frankland; the myth of the platypus; and the biographical piece written by Betty Pike and analyse each of these documents comparing and contrasting the effectiveness of the three as source documents discussing the impact of the forced removal of children.

Key questions that could extend students:

- a) Research the life story of Archie Roach and create a presentation using “Took the Children Away”

b) Watch the apology by PM Kevin Rudd and debate whether discussion of what happened to the Stolen Generations should now be considered ended or should the debate continue ... close references must be made to the text of the speech.

c) Interview a member of the Stolen Generations and report back to the class on the impact this experience has had on their life

d) Research the life of a Protector of Aborigines:

*creating a timeline of their story identifying key incidences that led to and impacted on their work

* identify major policies that were implemented

* a map that shows the lands in which they operated and the mobs of people who were the traditional owners

* quotes from people who were affected by the decisions made by the protector.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Year 7

* In the context of a study of religious truth in myths the students explore the difference between the story if read literally compared to a reading of the story in which the students have a clear understanding that the animals represent people in Betty Pike's life.

* Discuss the message of "belonging" in the story.

* Key question - how do different religions give their communities a sense of belonging?

Year 10

* Use the text "To Know, Worship and Love" in conjunction with "River Dreaming" to explore totems in Aboriginal Spirituality.

FURTHER AREAS OF DISCUSSION

In addition to the exhibition materials themselves, the book stimulates discussion and reflection in students and teachers. Discussion and reflection find that this story is a parable and as is usual with parables, A River Dreaming leaves the reader open to unexpected questions and challenges.

Some questions which Elizabeth Pike asks herself about the story are:

- a) What happens to Duck after her children swim off to become a new tribe?
- b) How would I feel if, like Duck, I lost my family through my own searching; lost my reputation through the actions of others; lost my children because they find that they are not part of my tribe?
- c) Are the platypuses successful in their efforts?
- d) What happened to Water Rat?

e) How well did the other animals respond to the development of a new tribe?

Some themes which come forward out of discussions about the story:

1. The History of European Settlement for those Aboriginal Australians who have no ties to their Aboriginal ancestry: the Nowhere People.
This is Elizabeth Pike's story, in part.
A story of the impact of complete loss of community and culture.
A Story of in-between-ness, of belonging neither in Aboriginal nor European culture.
2. A Story of Exclusion and Inclusion of Belonging and Loss of Belonging:
Duck rebels against rules and ends up excluded.
Platypus is different and ends up excluded.
Platypus forms a new tribe, creating possibilities for new bonds, new culture – but what happens to Duck? What happens to Water Rat?
3. Questions of Good and Evil:
Is doing good obeying the rules of the duck family and not swimming off or is it doing good to break the rules in order to find one's own place in the world? Do the rules actually seek to dominate duck analogously in fact to Water Rat capturing and imprisoning duck?
Is doing good seeking to bring someone into your society (to hide their disturbing differences? To capture the good things in the new person but not share it with anyone else? ...)
4. The importance of observing what is happening around us:
The duck/child playing alone and not content: do we ignore them as happened to duck and to Elizabeth or do we seek to help by seeking to understand their needs?

FURTHER RESOURCES

“My Place” Sally Morgan

“Nowhere People” by Henry Reynolds

<http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/spirituality/aboriginal-people-expressing-spirituality>

<http://www.connectinghome.org.au/aboutus>

<http://www.linkupvictoria.org.au/resources/resources>

<http://www.ub.edu/dpfilsa/coola3jarthur.pdf>

<http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/discoverycentre/identity/people-like-them/the-white-picket-fence/kevin-rudds-2008-apology-to-the-stolen-generations/>

