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# Introduction

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Within the pages of this book lies what I have found to be an invaluable tool for creating a reading program that is organised, manageable and, above all, motivating. Using books selected for their popularity, literary value and links to other key learning areas, these units foster the in-depth study of literature. At the same time, they encourage the teaching and learning of higher-order thinking skills with activities based on the revised Bloom's taxonomy.<sup>1</sup>

The use of picture storybooks provides a medium that is manageable for teachers and accessible to students of varied ability. The environment, war, cultural diversity, the plight of indigenous peoples, and gender stereotyping are just some of the many issues explored by the featured authors. Using a genre that is attractive and accessible to all, the books tell a story whilst also inviting their readers to think and act beyond the words of their pages.



## USING THE UNITS

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As with the study of any reading material it is important that the teacher be familiar with the text before beginning the work. This of course is easy to achieve when using picture storybooks. Whilst with some units background knowledge of the author and illustrator may be useful, it is not imperative to have this before commencing.

Each unit contains a list of useful resources for further information, as well as teaching and discussion points, links to other areas of the curriculum, and other titles on the same theme. The theme-linked books are all picture storybooks, unless specified otherwise.

Appendix 1 contains a guide to the tools and templates used throughout the book, while Appendix 2 contains a list of commonly used literary terms to assist with explaining these concepts to students.



## SEQUENCING

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The sessions in the planning guide provide a suggested structure for each unit, but can easily be combined or extended, depending on the requirements of each class. Some activities in the units can be completed independently by the students with minimal guidance. Others, however, will require the teaching of specific skills or literary elements. Knowledge of the unit will assist in planning here.

The order in which the activities appear in the grids does not need to be strictly adhered to. However, it is advisable to follow the vertical order, as this represents an ever-increasing complexity of thinking and skills. More flexibility and creativity can be added by allowing students to make up their own Creating activity.



## ASSESSMENT

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Teachers may choose to collect the student tasks for assessment as they complete them, or have the students prepare them as a unit of work. Many of the activities contained within the units can be used as common assessment tasks for such areas as comprehension, research skills and writing. Selected finished products also make excellent inclusions in student portfolios.

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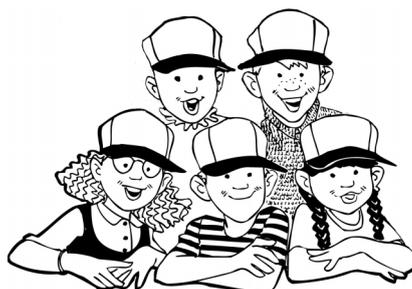
<sup>1</sup> Anderson L & Krathwohl D, 2001, *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching and Assessing*, New York: Addison Wesley Longman. Available in Australia from Hawker Brownlow Education.



## **WHOLE-CLASS USE**

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These units can successfully be used as a whole-class reading focus, with all children studying the same book. This is particularly beneficial if the book has been selected to complement an integrated unit of work. Whilst activities within the units can be readily manipulated to suit the varied skill levels of students, it is generally sufficient for teachers to alter their expectations of the finished product according to what they know of each child's capabilities. Once each activity has been discussed and the required skills taught, most children will be able to complete the activity with minimal input, freeing the teacher to assist or extend where necessary.



## **READING GROUPS**

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Once the students have become familiar with the format of the reading units and the style of the activities, it is possible to run a number of units concurrently. Children may be grouped according to learning needs or simply based on their interest in the available material. The advantage of this group format is that the teacher is able to timetable teaching and discussion sessions with smaller groups of children whilst the rest of the class pursue their independent activities.



## **INDEPENDENT UNITS**

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After extended experience with the reading units, students can be encouraged to select their own material and can be assisted in producing their own unit of work. Through conferencing and observation of the children's interests, teachers can also develop units to suit individual students.



## **ADAPTATION**

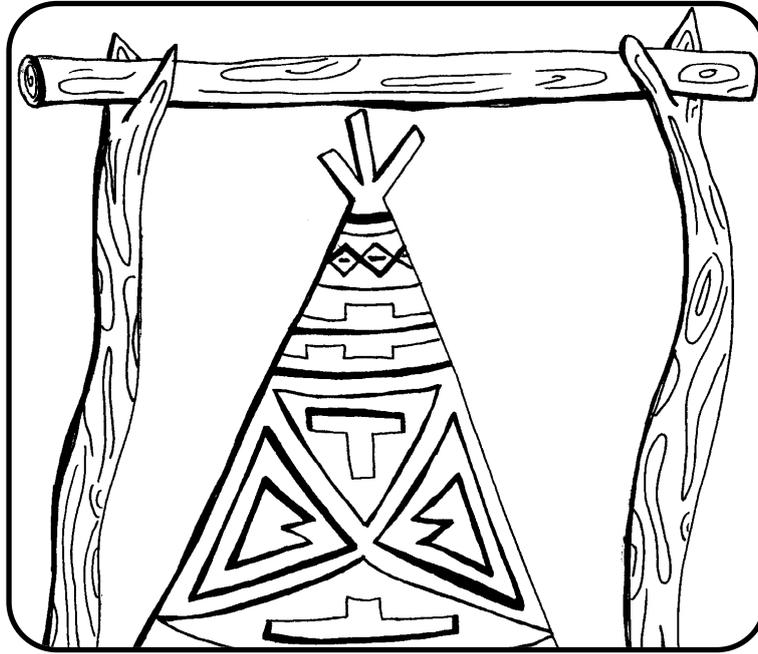
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The reading units contained in this book have been predominantly used with year five and six students. They are, however, readily adaptable to suit children down to year three and up to year nine. The format can also be applied to units of work on novels and on factual texts.

And so let the fun begin! If it is true that to open a book is to open a mind, then it is my hope that these ten books will help you to open many minds. Enjoy.

# Annie and the Old One

by Miska Miles and Peter Parnell



## SYNOPSIS

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*Annie and the Old One* is the story of a young Navajo girl who, faced with the imminent death of her grandmother, attempts to hold back time. It deals with the subject of death compassionately and philosophically whilst also providing some insight into Navajo life past and present.



## TEACHER'S NOTES

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The Navajo people form the largest Indian tribe in North America. They also occupy the largest reservation: 16 million acres, mostly in the state of Arizona. They pride themselves on being tenacious and adaptable, and have worked hard at preserving their culture and way of life whilst also ensuring their survival in the modern world. Over many centuries the Navajo have developed the skills of farming, weaving and silversmithing. They continue to perfect these skills and crafts, trading their goods for other requirements.

Whilst much of the land they now occupy is arid, it contains rich deposits of oil, gas and coal. The need to monitor access to this saw the formation of the Navajo Nation, a tribal government, in 1923. Part of their land also includes Monument Valley, which is much sought after as a Hollywood film location.

Many Navajo people continue to live in *hogans* (small earthen huts) and traditional ceremonies and celebrations are largely still observed. Though circumstances over hundreds of years have seen them settle far from their ancestral lands of Canada and Alaska, they continue to observe a strong connection to the land and nature.



## LESSON FOCUS

### Literary focus points

- ◆ the importance of setting to the impact of the story
- ◆ analogies and their role in creating imagery
- ◆ theme: the 'big ideas'
- ◆ plot: orientation, complication and solution

### Tools & teaching points

- ◆ Venn diagrams as a tool for comparing and contrasting
- ◆ research, atlas and mapping skills
- ◆ examining words from other languages
- ◆ writing argumentative essays

### Discussion points

- ◆ death and loss
- ◆ customs related to death
- ◆ Navajo culture
- ◆ dispossessed peoples of the world and land rights
- ◆ culturally based visual arts



## CURRICULUM LINKS

### Maths

- ◆ drawing circles
- ◆ mapping
- ◆ graphs (age and time)
- ◆ time

### SOSE

- ◆ exploring cultures
- ◆ investigating landforms
- ◆ atlas skills
- ◆ indigenous people

### Science

- ◆ life cycles
- ◆ climate
- ◆ erosion

### The arts

- ◆ weaving
- ◆ dream catchers
- ◆ Navajo design
- ◆ Navajo music
- ◆ beading

### Health & phys. ed.

- ◆ family units
- ◆ aging
- ◆ Navajo dance

### Technology

- ◆ purpose-designed housing
- ◆ Internet skills



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ◆ <http://inkido.indiana.edu/w310work/romac/navajo.htm>
- ◆ <http://www.americanwest.com/pages/navajo2.htm>
- ◆ *People in History* by Fiona McDonald
- ◆ *Indians of the Plains* by Ruth Thomson
- ◆ *Discoveries: Native Americans* edited by David Thomas and Lorann Pendleton
- ◆ atlases and dictionaries

## THEME-LINKED READINGS

- ◆ *John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat* by Jenny Wagner
- ◆ *Passing On* by Mike Dumbleton
- ◆ *Old Pig* by Margaret Wild
- ◆ *Jenny Angel* by Margaret Wild



## SESSION PLANNING GUIDE



- ◆ Read *Annie and the Old One* in a shared reading session and have students verbalise their initial responses to the story.
- ◆ Discuss some of the content-specific vocabulary from the book (for example *Navajo*, *mesa*, *hogan*, *loom*).
- ◆ Provide students with a brief background on the Navajo people or set children a homework task of finding out the who, when and where of Navajo people.



- ◆ Copy the Remembering activities onto the board or provide each student with copy of unit. (See page 12 for Activity grid.)
- ◆ Introduce or revise note-taking skills according to previous experience.
- ◆ Discuss the Remembering activities and the information required to complete them.
- ◆ Read the book aloud to students as they take notes, then have students complete the Remembering activities.



- ◆ Discuss the Understanding activities and re-read the book if the students require it.
  - ◆ Have students complete the Understanding activities.
- NB: You should adapt your expectations of the quality and depth of the answers provided by the students according to your knowledge of each student's capabilities.



- ◆ Introduce or revise Venn diagrams according to students' previous experience (see Appendix 1, page 58 for a sample Venn diagram).
- ◆ Ask students to list all the activities they carry out in a normal day.
- ◆ Using this list and their answers from Remembering 1, have students complete a Venn diagram for Applying 1. Encourage creative presentation: coloured paper, illustrations, headings and so on.



- ◆ Discuss analogies as a tool for authors to compare abstract concepts (such as love, hate or time) to items that are more concrete or visual. Share responses to Understanding 2.
- ◆ List students' ideas of analogies for different time frames, for example *in a heartbeat* (seconds), *many moons ago* (months) and *three harvests from now* (years).
- ◆ Have students complete Applying 2.



- ◆ Discuss the concepts of indigenous, displaced and dispossessed people.
- ◆ Provide students with books, atlases, websites and a map of the United States to complete Applying 3.
- ◆ Discuss the parallels between the indigenous people of North America and those of Australia.

 **SESSION PLANNING GUIDE** (continued)**7**

- ◆ Provide students with resources (books, websites) to complete Analysing 1.
- ◆ Share findings and discuss the importance of learning and teaching traditional skills for indigenous people.

**8**

- ◆ Discuss and list words from other languages that have been assimilated into the English language. Group the words according to their language of origin.
- ◆ Provide dictionaries and books on etymology for students to complete Analysing 2.
- ◆ Share results and add to class list.



- ◆ Discuss or revise 'setting' as a literary term according to students' experience.
- ◆ Read some picture storybooks in which the setting impacts on the overall effect of the book, for example *Rain Dance* by Cathy Applegate and *You and Me, Murrawee* by Kerri Hashmi, then have students complete Analysing 3.

**10**

- ◆ Introduce or revise principles of writing argumentative essays according to students' previous experience.
- ◆ Have students select one from the three Evaluating essay topics and write a list of points for and against.
- ◆ Share points noted by students.

**11**

- ◆ Have students write an essay for the Evaluating activity.  
NB: For students who are inexperienced or have not yet developed the skills to construct an argumentative essay you may wish to stop at session 10.

**12**

- ◆ Provide materials and instructions or instructors to assist students in carrying out a Creating activity of their choice.