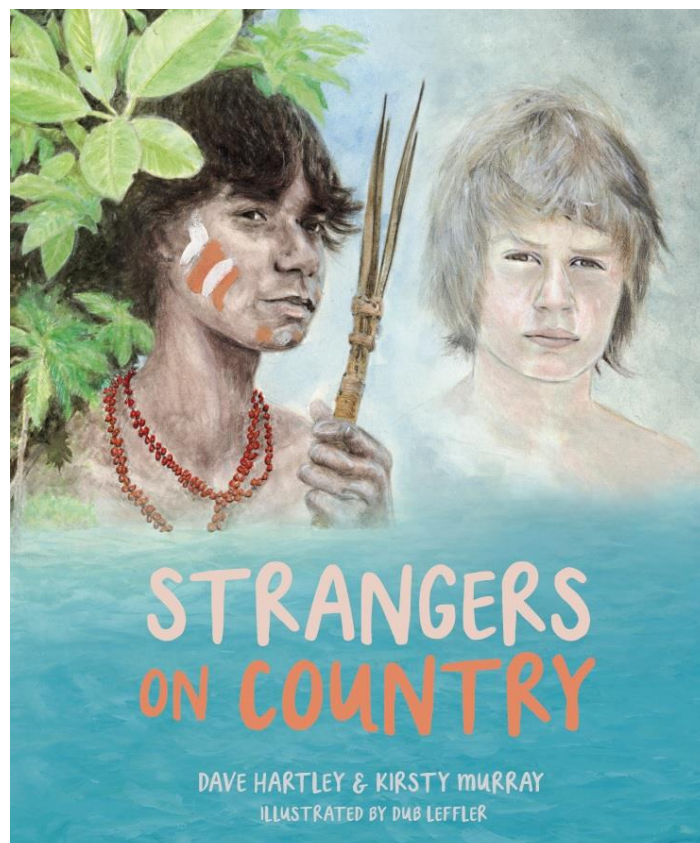


TEACHERS' NOTES

Strangers on Country
by Dave Hartley and Kirsty Murray

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Recommended Year Levels: Years 5-7

Author: David Hartley

David Hartley is a descendant of the traditional people Barunggam of the Darling Downs/Chinchilla regions of Queensland. Together with Scott Prince, he has written the award-winning *Deadly D* and *Justice Jones* series and has most recently published *TC and the Stinkiest Story Ever*.

Author: Kirsty Murray (kirstymurray.com)

Kirsty Murray is a multi-award-winning author of more than 20 books for children and young adults, and a fifth-generation Australian. She is the author of 11 novels as well as many picture books, junior fiction and non-fiction titles, including the 2013 CBCA Honour book, *Topsy Turvy World*.

Illustrator: Dub Leffler [(illustrator website)]

Dub Leffler grew up in Quirindi, New South Wales, as one of 13 children. He is a descendent of the Bigambul and Mandandanji people of south-west Queensland. His art career has included not only book authorship and illustration but also mural creation, animation and teaching. He illustrated the 2018 NLA Publishing book *Sorry Day*, winner of the 2019 CBCA Eve Pownall Award and 2018 Speech Pathology Book of the Year Award (Indigenous Children category). In 2012, a picture book he wrote and illustrated, *Once There Was a Boy*, was a finalist in the Deadly Awards (Outstanding Achievement in Literature category) and was shortlisted for the Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year Awards (Indigenous Children category).

About the Book

Imagine you find a mysterious stranger on your favourite beach. They are pale, starving, desperate for shelter and speak a language you can't understand—where have they come from? Despite your fears, you treat them with kindness. You feed them and comfort them. They become like family to you and learn how to live on country.

All five stories in *Strangers on Country* are based on historical records. Working together to write from both Indigenous and European perspectives, the authors have brought to life five remarkable true stories about Europeans who were taken in by Indigenous people.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM CONTENT

- Learning areas
 - HASS History
 - HASS Geography
- Cross-curriculum priorities
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures
 - Sustainability
- General capabilities
 - Critical and creative thinking
 - Ethical understanding
 - Intercultural understanding
- Digital Classroom
 - Year 5: [Indigenous Experiences](#)
 - Year 5: [Convict Experiences](#)
 - Year 6: [Edward Koiki Mabo](#)
 - Year 7: [Cultural Perspectives in Literature: Poetry](#)

Introductory Activities

These are activities to do before reading to prepare students for the concepts/themes explored in the book. They are not necessarily curriculum based.

- Look at the cover of the book with the class. What do you think this book will be about? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Discuss the broad themes of the book:
 - clashes of culture
 - treatment of strangers
 - adapting to a different way of life

HASS—History

Year 5

Content description

Examine primary sources and secondary sources to determine their origin and purpose ([ACHASSI098](#))

Elaboration

- identifying the purpose and usefulness of information gained from primary and secondary sources (for example, checking publication details)

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- Discuss the differences between the way the story is told in the primary and secondary sources.
 - How do they differ?
 - Why are there differences in the various accounts?
 - Examine such things as:
 - cultural perspectives
 - the passage of time
 - different understandings of Indigenous culture.

Activity

- Select one of the stories from *Strangers on Country*. Using both the National Library of Australia catalogue and Trove, find primary and secondary sources containing information about the people in you're the chosen story.
 - Write two versions of their story, one based on primary sources and one based on secondary sources.

Content description

Examine different viewpoints on actions, events, issues and phenomena in the past and present ([ACHASSI099](#))

Elaborations

- comparing sources of evidence to identify similarities and/or differences in accounts of the past (for example, comparing colonial descriptions of Burke and Wills' achievements with those that have been recently published with Aboriginal perspectives; different representations of Ned Kelly in past and present publications)

Activity

Strangers on Country explores incidents in Australian history, presenting them from two different perspectives—that of the white settlers and convicts and that of the Indigenous people. Divide the class into small groups. Each group should:

- Select and research an incident from Australian history involving European settlers and Indigenous people. Historical incidents could include:
 - the landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay in 1770
 - the inclusion of Aboriginal cricketers in the first Australian cricket team to tour the United Kingdom, in 1868
 - the search for the Duff children, who were lost in the bush in Victoria in 1864 and found by Aboriginal trackers
 - the rescue of European settlers from the 1852 Gundagai floods by Wiradjuri men
 - Grace Bussell and Sam Isaacs' rescue of passengers aboard the SS *Georgette*, who were shipwrecked in 1873.
- Each group should then divide into two smaller groups, with one half presenting their historical story from the perspective of the Europeans and the other half from the perspective of the Indigenous people

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- Discuss the ways in which the tone and atmosphere of a story can change based on whose perspective it is told from, even when the story is based on the same research material. Using the example of one of the class presentations, how do the two stories differ? In which ways are they the same? How do motives, reactions and emotions change with each retelling?

Content description

The nature of convict or colonial presence, including the factors that influenced patterns of development, aspects of the daily life of the inhabitants (including Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples) and how the environment changed ([ACHASSK107](#))

Elaborations

- investigating colonial life to discover what life was like at that time for different inhabitants (for example, a European family and an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language group, a convict and a free settler, a sugar cane farmer and an indentured labourer) in terms of clothing, diet, leisure, paid and unpaid work, shopping or trade, language, housing and children's lives
- discussing challenges experienced by people in the colonial era and the enterprising or sustainable responses made to these challenges (wind energy, food preservation, communication, accessing water)

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

Discuss the major differences between the lifestyles of Indigenous people and European settlers in the 1800s:

- How did the two groups adapt to living in the Australian landscape and climate?
- Which lifestyle was more effective? Why?
- How did the arrival of European settlers affect the lifestyle and livelihood of Indigenous people?

Activity

Select one of the stories in *Strangers on Country* and examine what it reveals about the different lifestyles of the European settlers and the Indigenous inhabitants.

Create a comparative chart highlighting the following for each group:

- clothing
- food
- family relationships
- leisure activities
- jobs
- dwellings
- children's education.

Year 6

Content description

Examine primary sources and secondary sources to determine their origin and purpose ([ACHASSI126](#))

Elaborations

- identifying and distinguishing fact and opinion in information and identifying stereotypes and over-generalisations (for example, over-generalisations about the role of women, the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, the work of politicians, the beliefs of religious groups)
- checking the publishing details of a text to help clarify the publication's purpose, to identify potential bias in the content and assess its relevance, and to put information presented in an historical or geographical context

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

Discuss how newspaper accounts reflect the cultural beliefs of the people writing them, and the time and place in which they were written:

- How have attitudes to Indigenous people changed since the 1800s?
- Why have such changes occurred?
- Is further change needed? Why or why not?

Activity

Research and analyse the newspaper reports on one of the stories in *Strangers on Country*:

- record the type of language used to describe the Indigenous people who took in the lost Europeans
- compare it with the language used to describe the Europeans who were stranded among the Indigenous people
- rewrite the newspaper article using unbiased and non-stereotyped language that reflects what actually happened when the stranded person was taken in by the Indigenous people.

Content description

Examine different viewpoints on actions, events, issues and phenomena in the past and present ([ACHASSI127](#))

Elaboration

- discussing issues where there are, or were, a range of views and proposing reasons for different perspectives (for example, different opinions about the deportation of South Sea Islanders from 1901, the vote for women, how to manage an environment more sustainably)

Activity

In *Strangers on Country*, the authors reveal the ways in which Indigenous people farmed, cultivated and managed the land they lived on.

- Research early reports of how Indigenous people farmed, cultivated and conserved the land
- Present findings to the class as either:
 - a map, showing how Indigenous people lived in one particular area
 - a wallchart exploring the different forms of Indigenous farming, including agriculture, aquaculture and food storage.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

Discuss the reasons why the belief that Indigenous people were hunters and gatherers, rather than farmers and settlers, persisted for so long in Australia. Examine such things as:

- *terra nullius*
- how European settlers justified taking over the land, even though it was already settled by Indigenous people
- who gained what from the persistence of these beliefs
- the significance of this view now changing

Content description

Experiences of Australian democracy and citizenship, including the status and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, migrants, women and children ([ACHASSK135](#))

Elaboration

- investigating the lack of citizenship rights for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Australia, illustrated by controls on movement and residence, the forcible removal of children from their families leading to the Stolen Generations, and poor pay and working conditions

Activity

Some of the Indigenous people in *Strangers on Country* were forcibly removed from their country to government missions or protectorates, where the rules were set and enforced by Europeans.

- Research one of these missions and find out:
 - how it was run
 - who was sent there
 - why they were sent there
 - what life was like on the mission
 - the effect living on a mission had on Indigenous people.
- Write a story from the perspective of a child who has been taken away from their country and sent to live on a mission.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

Discuss why Indigenous people were taken away from their native lands and made to live on mission stations and in Aboriginal protectorates:

- Why were they treated in this way?
- What effect did it have on them?
- What might their lives have been like if this hadn't happened to them?

Year 7

Content description

Construct significant questions and propositions to guide investigations about people, events, developments, places, systems and challenges (ACHASSI152)

Elaborations

- making propositions to be tested through a research process
- appreciating that there may not be a definitive answer to an inquiry question

Activity

Read a selection of the stories in *Strangers on Country*. Select one of them and research various accounts of what happened, based on the following proposition:

- Stranded European settlers who were taken in by Indigenous communities were badly treated.

Write an expository report comparing the ways the story is presented in the following sources:

- contemporary newspaper reports
- accounts written or narrated by the people involved
- accounts written by others after the event.

In your report, discuss whether the various accounts support or contradict the above proposition.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

Discuss how propositions, such as the one in the activity above, were first posited.

- Who put forward such propositions?
- Who benefited from them?
- What did they justify?

- How did the class's research confirm or deny such propositions?

Content description

Examine primary sources and secondary sources to determine their origin, purpose and reliability ([ACHASSI156](#))

Elaborations

- differentiating between primary sources in history (those from the time of the event/person/site being investigated) and secondary sources (those that represent later interpretations)
- identifying who in a source is conveying information about a past or present event and suggesting whose voice may be absent (for example, women, children, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples, slaves, religious leaders)

Activity

Select one of the stories in *Strangers on Country*. Examine the primary sources that relate to this historical story:

- contemporary newspaper accounts
- firsthand retellings by those involved
- photographs, artworks or other images from the time.

Create a graphic novel or series of comic strips retelling the story from one of the following perspectives:

- the Indigenous person involved
- the European settler involved
- a child in the Indigenous community that took the European settler in
- a parent, wife, husband or child of the stranded European settler.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- Discuss the different perspectives people bring to the retelling of a story depending on who they are and how the event or experience affected them.

Content description

Analyse primary sources and secondary sources to identify values and perspectives on people, actions, events, issues and phenomena, past and present ([ACHASSI157](#))

Elaborations

- recognising that limited evidence can sometimes give useful insights into the power structures of a society
- using strategies to detect whether a statement is factual or an opinion, including identification of word choices that may indicate an opinion is being offered (for example, the use of conditionals 'might', 'could', and other words such as 'believe', 'think', 'suggests')

Activity

Select one of the stories in *Strangers on Country*. Examine the primary sources that relate to this historical story:

- contemporary newspaper accounts
- firsthand retellings from those involved
- photographs, artworks or other images from the time

Do the same with the secondary sources relating to this story. Then identify the differences in the way the story is told. Examine and report on the following:

- What sort of language is used in the accounts to describe the Indigenous people involved?
- What sort of language is used to describe the European person involved in the incident depicted in the various sources?
- How does the language used differ, and what is it used to convey about the people involved?

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- Discuss the ways in which language can be manipulated in both primary and secondary sources to present a particular view of the world or to make one group seem more important or powerful than another.

Content description

The importance of conserving the remains of the ancient past, including the heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples ([ACHASSK171](#))

Elaboration

- investigating world heritage criteria for the listing of significant ancient sites, using an example of an ancient site such as Pompeii

Activity

In the stories in *Strangers on Country*, the Europeans who became a part of the Indigenous communities they were adopted into learnt to respect the places, the cultural artefacts and the ceremonies that were sacred to the people they were living with.

- On a map, identify sites in Australia that are sacred to Indigenous people,
- Select one of these sites and research what makes it a significant place for the local Indigenous people.
- Write a poem, create a song or paint a picture that captures the character, meaning and significance of this sacred place.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- Discuss what makes a sacred site—a place that is culturally important and significant to a community or a nation.
- Using Uluru as an example, discuss why such sacred sites should be protected and respected.

Content description

Contacts and conflicts within and/or with other societies, resulting in developments and the spread of philosophies and beliefs ([ACHASSK180](#))

Elaboration

- examining the extent of Indian contact with other societies (for example, the Persians under Cyrus or the Macedonians under Alexander; the extensive trade with the Romans and Chinese; the material remains of the Mauryan Empire such as the Pillars of Ashoka and the Barabar Caves; the spread of Hinduism and Buddhism)

Activity

As the stories in *Strangers on Country* show, cultural exchange takes place in both directions. While the European castaways and convicts who lived with the Aboriginal people adopted many of their cultural ways and beliefs, they would also have passed on some of their belief systems and cultural mores to the people they were living with.

Examine the stories of Narcisse Pelletier and James Morrill. Write a biography of one of these men based on answers to the following questions:

- Where did they grow up and what was their life like?
- How did they end up as castaways in an Indigenous community?
- What was their life like living among Indigenous people?
- How did they fit into their new society?
- What did they learn about living on the land?
- How and why did they leave the Indigenous community?
- What happened to them once they returned to their own society?
- How did they cope with being a part of two different cultures?
- What did they learn from their time in the Indigenous community that adopted them?

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss the effect that living in a different society, with different beliefs and social customs, would have on the way you view the world.

HASS—Geography

Year 6

Content description

Differences in the economic, demographic and social characteristics of countries across the world ([ACHASSK139](#))

Elaboration

- researching the population size and density of a selection of countries around the world

Activity

As the true stories in *Strangers on Country* show, in the 1800s, the lifestyles of people living in the United Kingdom and of Indigenous Australians were very different. Using the information provided in both the story and information sections of *Strangers on Country*, create a wall chart highlighting the differences and similarities between the two cultures in the following areas:

- food sources

- dwellings
- population density
- sources of income/prosperity
- law and order
- social hierarchies
- treatment of children
- governing bodies.

Discussion/Inquiry Question

Discuss the relative merits of the two cultures:

- How do they differ?
- How are they the same?
- Which culture would you prefer to have lived in at that time in Australia?

Content description

The world's cultural diversity, including that of its indigenous peoples ([ACHASSK140](#))

Elaboration

- identifying examples of indigenous peoples who live in different regions in the world (for example, the Maori of Aotearoa New Zealand, the First Nations of North America and the Orang Asli of Malaysia and Indonesia), appreciating their similarities and differences, and exploring the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Activity

Identify which of the Indigenous people featured in *Strangers on Country* are Aboriginal people and which are Torres Strait Islanders. Identify the differences between their cultures based on information provided in the book. Create a wall map of Australia showing:

- where they lived
- how they lived (listing, for example, their type of housing, food sources, ceremonies, artwork, leisure activities).

Discussion/Inquiry Question

Discuss the ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities differ, and the geographical factors that influenced their different lifestyles.

Concluding Activities

Creative Response

- Compare the artwork of the two cultures coming together in this book:
 - Look at artwork from Europe in the 1900s and traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artwork from the same period
 - Examine the similarities and differences
 - Create two portraits of one of the people featured in this book, one in a European art style and the other an Indigenous art style.
- Write a song retelling the story of one of the characters from *Strangers on Country*:
 - portray the emotions they felt experiencing the 'clash of cultures'

- create a video presenting your song.
- Write a short play retelling one of the stories presented in this book. Be sure to present both sides of the story.
- Create a painting depicting the first encounter between two of the people featured in this book. Be sure to research the landscape, the flora and fauna, the clothing they wore, their dwellings and so on.

Further Reading

Books

- Fogarty, Renee, *Fair Skin Black Fella*. Broome, WA: Magabala Books, 2010.
- Greenwood, Mark and Denton, Terry, *Boomerang and Bat*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2016.
- Maynard, John and Haskins, Victoria, *Living with the Locals: Early Europeans' Experiences of Indigenous Life*. Canberra: NLA Publishing, 2016.
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- Pascoe, Bruce, *Young Dark Emu: A Truer History*. Broome, WA: Magabala Books, 2019.
- Reeder, Stephanie Owen, *Amazing Grace: An Adventure at Sea*. Canberra: NLA Publishing, 2011.
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- Tan, Shaun, *The Arrival*. South Melbourne: Lothian Books, 2006.

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- 'Aboriginal Cricket Team', National Museum of Australia, nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/aboriginal-cricket-team.
- Stewart, A.F. Ferguson, 'Wreck of the Georgette: Australia's Grace Darling', *The West Australian*, 12 October 1935, p.4, nla.gov.au/nla.news-article32907079.