



wise words

This picture book unit has been developed in the Wise Words section of the NTDLs website. It provides teachers, parents and home tutors with access to shared ideas, teaching and learning tips and some best practice materials to use with your children.

Learning Area : Integrated
Integrated Band Level: Key Growth Point 2 – Band 1
Developer: Sue Thomson

Ernie Dances to the Didgeridoo

by Alison Lester



Book Overview

A young boy, Ernie moves with his family to the outback Oenpelli Community of Gunbalanya, (24 km east of Darwin) in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, for a year. He writes home to his friends about his experiences. He learns that they are studying the exact place in which he is living. Follow Ernie's adventures with his six new friends. The story is based on the author, Alison Lester's visit to the community. This book is another in the series that Lester has written about those special kids: Clive, Rosie, Frank, Tessa, Nicky, Clive and Celeste, and now our new friend Ernie.

Awards

CBCA Shortlist Picture Book of the Year 2001

Picture Book of the Year 2000

Learning Outcomes from NT Curriculum Framework

Activity

Spatial Sense

- ◆ **Map** Ernie's trip on a large map of **Australia**. Talk about concepts such as wide, long.
- ◆ Look for **shapes** in the book. After you have read it to the kids (for enjoyment first), get them to write down or draw all the shapes in the book.
- ◆ Use a variety of **lines, shapes and dots** to make background patterns for art work.
- ◆ Invent a **repeated pattern** for a didgeridoo.

(SS KGP 3.1 – 3.3; Band 1.1 – 1.3)



Number Sense

- ◆ **Count** the kids on the first page (where Ernie comes from) and add the new friends he meets at **Gunbalanya**; e.g. Rosie, Frank, Tessa, Nicky, Clive and Celeste –**home**; Sammi, Christine, Joseph, Patrick, Jenna and Tammy. Draw/photocopy pictures and do lots of sums (**add, subtract, number stories** etc).
- ◆ How many **animals** are in this book?
- ◆ Look at the special '**Arnhem Land**' activities. Make a **graph** of the one you would like to do.
- ◆ **Create number questions** about the children and the letters in the book. How many? Who? What? Where? etc.

(NS KGP 3.1 – 3.3; Band 1.1 – 1.3)

Additional Ideas

- ◆ Collect **different Aboriginal paintings** and look at the different **patterns** and **shapes** that create them. Make some handprint art by tracing around students' hands and filling a squirt bottle with tempera paint and water (2 parts tempera and 1 part water).
- ◆ If time permits make up a '**PowerPoint**' display - a very easy and effective learning tool. Use www.aboriginalartonline.com
- ◆ See if you can get someone in as a **special guest** to put on a performance, or a parent who has some Indigenous perspectives.

Measurement and Data

- ◆ Look at a **map and discuss** terms like longer/shorter than etc.
- ◆ Get some **actual measurements** of real crocodiles from the Internet. Trace a paper crocodile. Look up "Sweetheart", in the Darwin Museum on <http://nt.gov.au/nreta/museums/sweetheart/index.html> Kids love this!
- ◆ Look at **time/seasons** in Arnhem Land: Kudjewk (monsoon), Bangkerreng (harvest time), Yekke (cool weather) etc. These are all listed on the inside front cover of the book.

(MDS KGP 3.1 – 3.3; Band 1.1 – 1.3)



- ◆ **Alison Lester** based this book on visits to the **Gunbalanya** community at Oenpelli, 240 km east of Darwin during 1996 and 1997. Where is this? Find out all you can about the community. **Write to** the kids at the school there at the following address:
- ◆ Gunbalanya Community School. PMB 66, Via Darwin, NT 0822.
- ◆ Look at the Top End **climate system**, monsoons etc. Make a great **wall mural**.
- ◆ A great book for looking at the **format of letter writing**.
- ◆ Suitable for lots of **shared reading** and **writing** activities. Photocopy the letters and do individually.
- ◆ Write a **recount** explicitly outlining the when/who/where/why of the book.
- ◆ Choose from a **story map**, **time line** (using the seasons) or **collaborative text** for another recount.
- ◆ **Sequence** the stories by putting the pictures in order. Photocopy them in colour.
- ◆ Use the words in the book for **vocabulary/spelling**: didgeridoo, Arnhem Land, seasons, Darwin, barramundi, buffalo, crocodile, mosquitoes, Dreamtime etc. Other words you might like to use are: Indigenous, outback, culture, natural environment, symbol, ochre, to name a few.
- ◆ What is a **Didgeridoo**?
- ◆ **Alison Lester** is a great author. Look at some more of her books like *Magic Beach*, *Are We There Yet?* Look also at the other books about the kids Tessa etc. Also look up Wikipedia.



Other websites:

<http://www.det.wa.edu.au/education/cmis/eval/fiction/authors/at12.htm>

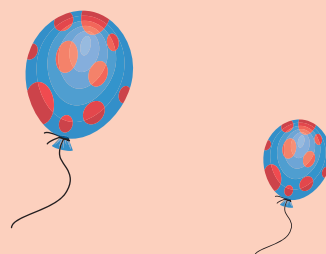
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/prc/keypeople/ambassadors/lester.htm>

<http://www.cli.nsw.edu.au/cli/WritersTalk/sections/lester.htm>

http://www.cli.nsw.edu.au/cli/WritersTalk/lo/lester_MC/lester_MC_04.htm

<http://www.alisonlester.net/biography.html> (this is excellent)

- ◆ Use her striking colourful **illustrations** as a focal learning point.
- ◆ Ernie's **letters** are a great snapshot and insight into Aboriginal/Indigenous culture and are also a great introductory point for learning about the subject.
- ◆ There are some excellent facts about **Gunbalanya** on both the inside front and back cover for your class to access.





FROM ALLEN AND UNWIN

Imagine

Magic Beach

My Farm

Yikes!

Alison Lester's ABC

The Quicksand Pony

The Snow Pony

Bonnie and Sam, The Shadow Brumby

Bonnie and Sam, Racing the Tide

Bonnie and Sam, The Circus Pony

Bonnie and Sam, Saving Mr Pinto

The Australian Baby

Books Bibs and Boots,

Happy and Sad,

Crashing and Splashing,

Bumping and Bouncing

FROM HACHETTE CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Clive Eats Alligators

Rosie Sips Spiders

Celeste Sails to Spain

When Frank was Four

Tessa Snaps Snakes

Ernie Dances to the Didgeridoo

Ruby

The Journey Home

Isabella's Bed



FROM PENGUIN & ABC

Roar, Talk to the Wild Animals

Moo, Talk to the Farm Animals

Purr, Talk to the Pet Animals

I'm Green and I'm Grumpy

Monsters are Knocking

Are We There Yet?



Reference

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