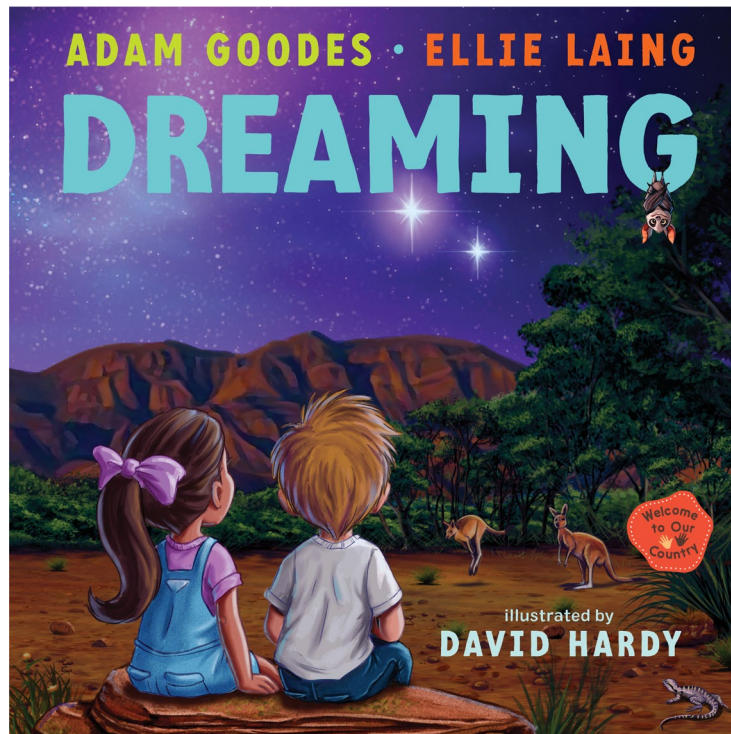




DREAMING

Written by ADAM GOODES and ELLIE LAING

Illustrated by DAVID HARDY

Published by ALLEN & UNWIN

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country on which we work, live, learn and engage. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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THEMES: First Nations, Indigenous Australians, Aboriginal culture and knowledge, Country, Dreaming

RECOMMENDED FOR: 4–8 years old. A book for preschool to Year 3

NOTES WRITTEN BY: Cool Australia

**COOL
.ORG**


ALLEN & UNWIN

ABOUT DREAMING

*In my dreaming at night, I see pictures behind my eyes that take me far away.
Way way back in the beginning, Akurras slithered, carving rivers, in a Creation story from my
Dreaming, my Muda.
Law men came down from the sky to teach us about our Country.
In my Muda, the Ancestors are never far, and I can see how I fit and who I am.*

Told in a child's voice, *Dreaming* is a joyful and thought-provoking story in the bestselling and award-winning Welcome to Our Country series, and follows one young girl as she imagines what it might be like to be part of the Dreaming, past and present.

ABOUT THE WELCOME TO OUR COUNTRY SERIES

Welcome to Our Country is a series of books designed to connect young children, parents and educators with First Nations history and culture. The series is a collaboration between Adnyamathanha and Narungga man Adam Goodes (former Australian Rules footballer, Australian of the Year in 2014 and co-founder of the GO Foundation), political advisor and former journalist Ellie Laing, and Barkindji illustrator David Hardy.

Together the creators hope the series will be an invaluable tool for children, parents and educators to start conversations and better understand our shared history.

A WORD FROM THE CREATORS OF DREAMING

We acknowledge that the word Dreaming means different things to different people. We also acknowledge that Dreaming is not a traditional word used by Aboriginal people. However, it is the word commonly used to try to explain the interconnectedness, complexity and richness of the Creation stories and spirituality of Aboriginal culture. We have used the word Dreaming in this book to introduce the vastness of this concept.

In Adnyamathanha culture, Muda is the word used to describe a never-ending cycle that links the past, present and future. This cycle is central to the identity of many Aboriginal people and nations, and is linked to Country and spirituality. Muda explains how the world was created by ancestral spirits and how people and nature interact.

As you read this book, rather than try to fully understand or make sense of Dreaming and Muda in your mind, we hope the story helps you feel and appreciate their central importance to the culture and lives of Aboriginal people.

Adam Goodes, Ellie Laing and David Hardy

IMPORTANT INFORMATION BEFORE READING *DREAMING*

Language and Using Language

Using a new language for the first time is tricky for everyone. You might be concerned about mispronouncing words, using them incorrectly or accidentally causing offence. Much like learning any skill, you'll make mistakes at the start and will improve with practice and as your confidence increases. The effort and intent are much more important than the level of skill. Just do your best and use this as a role-modelling opportunity for your students.

Understanding Dreaming

As explored in the book, the word Dreaming means different things to different people, especially First Nations peoples and communities. For the purpose of this text, Dreaming is used to explain the interconnectedness of First Nations Creation stories and the spirituality of Aboriginal culture, which is rich in knowledge.

Dreaming is passed from generation to generation through storytelling. A common misconception is that Dreaming took place at the beginning of time. It is important to understand that Dreaming is a non-linear journey for First Nations peoples, and it encompasses the past, present and future as it is interwoven in the livelihoods of many First Nations people.

The Dreaming, which is shared through stories, has been passed down through generations for over 65,000 years. The Dreaming is representative of the diversity and individuality of First Nations mobs, clans and groups across the continent as the stories can differ between Nations. While there are some commonalities between Nations, it is important to note that this book focuses on the Adnyamathanha culture and language.

Knowing the Country You Are On

In this book, the character explores her connection to the Dreaming through multiple settings and the different landscapes of Adnyamathanha Country using both English and Adnyamathanha language. We recommend familiarising yourself with the Traditional Custodians of the Country you're on, and their language, traditions and culture. You can start by exploring the [AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia](#) and checking out useful tools such as the [Gambay First Languages Map](#).

As you begin exploring the First Nations languages of Australia, you might notice that some words are hard to find, or that multiple spellings and pronunciations exist for the same word. This is because many language groups are in the process of language revival, a journey often supported by oral histories, personal memories, and records written by European settlers. Naturally, this means there will be inconsistencies and gaps. Like all living languages, First Nations languages continue to grow and change, just as your students regularly expand their own vocabularies.

Use the words that have been generously shared with respect and care. By speaking these languages, we help keep them alive and allow them to flourish for future generations. Before

colonisation, over 250 distinct languages were spoken across Australia. Approximately 123 of these languages are in use today, 12 of these being spoken fluently by all generations within a community. ([source](#)).

Protocols

Cultural knowledge is central to the identity, history and traditions of First Nations peoples. It is not simply information. It holds deep spiritual, cultural and communal meaning. Engaging with this knowledge requires a clear understanding of its significance, and a commitment to respecting the protocols that govern how it is shared and used.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are deeply connected to Country, stories and customs, which are passed down through generations via oral traditions such as storytelling, ceremony, song, art and other cultural practices. Respecting these practices begins with recognising the rightful holders of this knowledge and ensuring it is only shared with permission. Some knowledge is considered sacred or restricted and is not meant for public sharing.

As educators, it's important to avoid misrepresenting or using cultural knowledge inappropriately. This means working closely with Traditional Owners when incorporating First Nations perspectives into your teaching, so that these perspectives are represented truthfully and with cultural integrity.

What can you do in practice?

- Always seek permission – Before using any cultural knowledge, ask if it can be shared, and follow the direction of Elders or community members. Some knowledge is not appropriate for general classroom use.
- Acknowledge the source – When sharing cultural knowledge, credit the Traditional Custodians and use the terminology they prefer to ensure their voices are respected and represented accurately.
- Respect cultural ownership and protocols – cultural knowledge belongs to the community. Using it without permission can be a form of appropriation.
- Use First Nations-created resources – Where possible, include materials developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and involve community members in the learning journey.
- Avoid generalisations – Be specific about the Nation, language group or community connected to the cultural knowledge, as practices and traditions vary widely.
- Commit to ongoing learning – Build your cultural understanding through training, listening to First Nations voices, and engaging with community-led initiatives.

Approaching cultural knowledge with respect builds stronger relationships, supports deeper learning, and ensures that First Nations histories and traditions are recognised and shared in ethical, appropriate ways.

Useful Questions

Before reading this book, ask yourself:

- Why have I chosen this book to read with my class?
- What do I already know about First Nations cultures, and what gaps might I have in my understanding?
- How can I ensure I approach this book with cultural sensitivity and openness?
- What context or background knowledge might my students need before engaging with this story?

After reading this book, ask yourself:

- How does this book expand or challenge my own understanding of First Nations cultures?
- In what ways does the storytelling reflect the importance of Country, kinship and community?
- How can I support students to respectfully reflect on the cultural knowledge shared in this book?
- What actions can I take to continue embedding First Nations perspectives meaningfully in my classroom?

Personal Check-in

Before bringing this book into your classroom, take an opportunity to reflect on your own knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories and cultures. Cultural responsiveness and awareness begin with acknowledging the limitations of our own perspectives. You should consider:

- What assumptions, knowledge or lived experiences do I bring into the classroom?
- How can I confront any biases, prejudices or stereotypes that I may have?
- What is my understanding of First Nations peoples and their connection to the Dreaming?

Cultural Safety for Children

Dreaming, alongside all of the books in the Welcome to Our Country series, provides the opportunity to learn and immerse yourself in culturally significant stories and teachings. When using this book in the classroom, ensure that you create a safe, inclusive and supportive environment for all students.

If you have students in your class who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, recognise that they are all at different points of their journey, learning about their identity, Ancestors and culture. With this in mind, avoid asking students to share personal perspectives or cultural knowledge related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content without first speaking with them privately and ensuring they feel safe, informed and willing to participate. It is essential to approach each student with sensitivity and respect, recognising that cultural identity is deeply personal and can be experienced in many different

ways. Be mindful of the diversity of experiences within your classroom and create a space that is inclusive, supportive and free of assumptions.

If you wish to learn more about the Country you are on, begin by building relationships with your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. You can do this by reaching out to your Local Aboriginal Network (LAN) or the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) of your area. Before approaching, be mindful and respectful that these organisations can have many demands for their time. You can complete research online, explore projects this organisation has undertaken in the past, attend community events or ask your local council if you need a starting point.

Local First Nations organisations often have information about a region's history and culture, and provide contacts and links to trusted sources of information. Once you have researched, use the information you find to engage with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. By developing your own understanding through research, you are actively seeking opportunities to build your knowledge and understanding. The following websites are great resources to get you started:

- [AIATSIS](#)
- [Common Ground](#)
- [Reconciliation Australia](#)
- [SNAICC](#)

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Dive Deeper into Dreaming

Step 1: Let's dive deep into *Dreaming*! Invite students to sit in a circle and explain that before reading *Dreaming*, everyone is invited to share their thoughts, memories or questions connected to the themes of the book. Facilitate a discussion with students, and select some of the following tiered questions to prompt their thinking:

Noticing:

- What do you notice on the cover of this book?
- What might it tell us about the story inside?
- What do you wonder about this book?

Thinking:

- Have you heard of the Dreaming before?
- What do you know about the Dreaming?
- What special stories do you remember about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures?

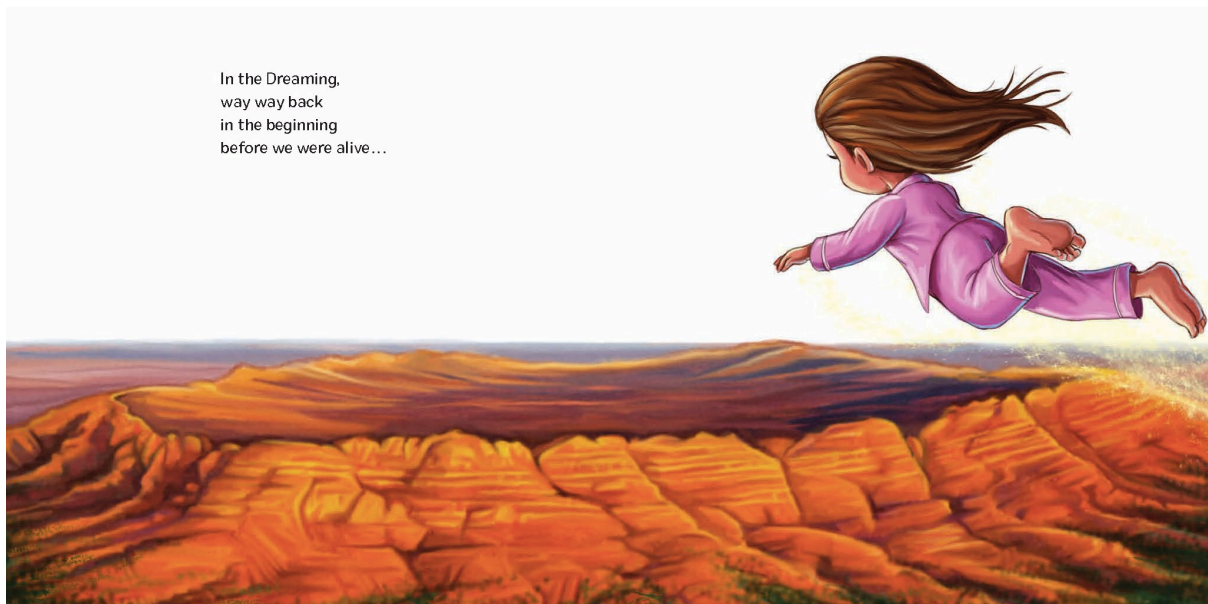
Wondering:

- Why is it important to listen respectfully to stories from other people and cultures?
- How do stories help us connect to our past, present and future?
- Do all stories have hidden messages?

Step 2: Read *Dreaming* aloud to the class from start to finish. Allow students time to absorb the illustrations as you progress through the book.

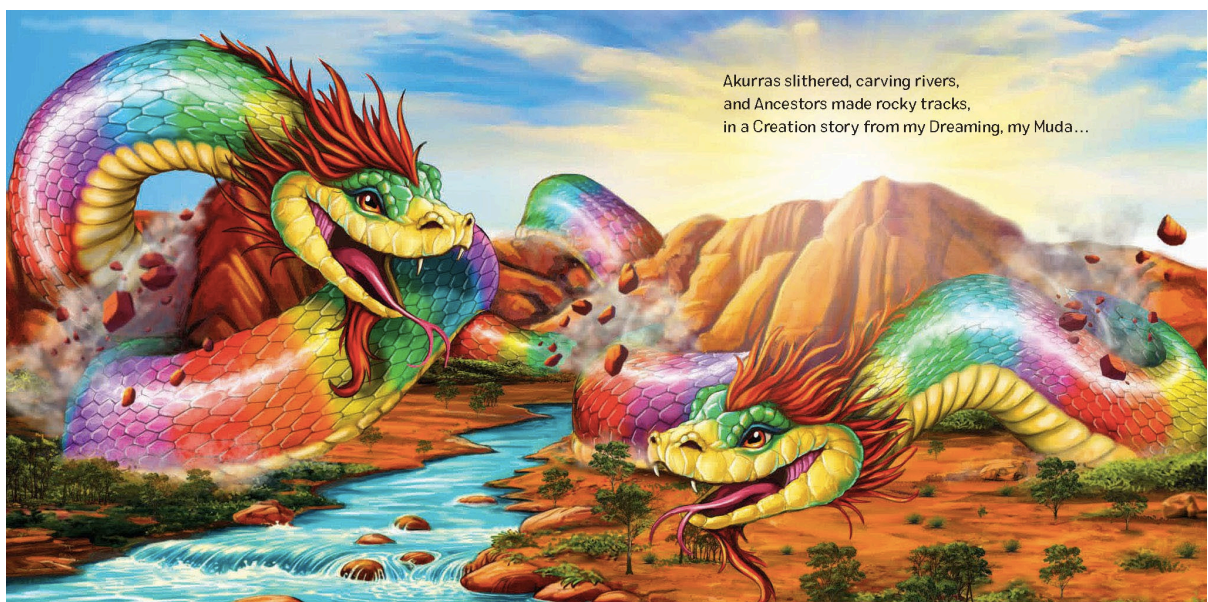
As you pause, encourage students to notice both the words and the artwork, and how they help them build connections and understanding.

Step 3: Time to reflect! Revisit the following pages with your students and use the prompts to guide a class reflection.



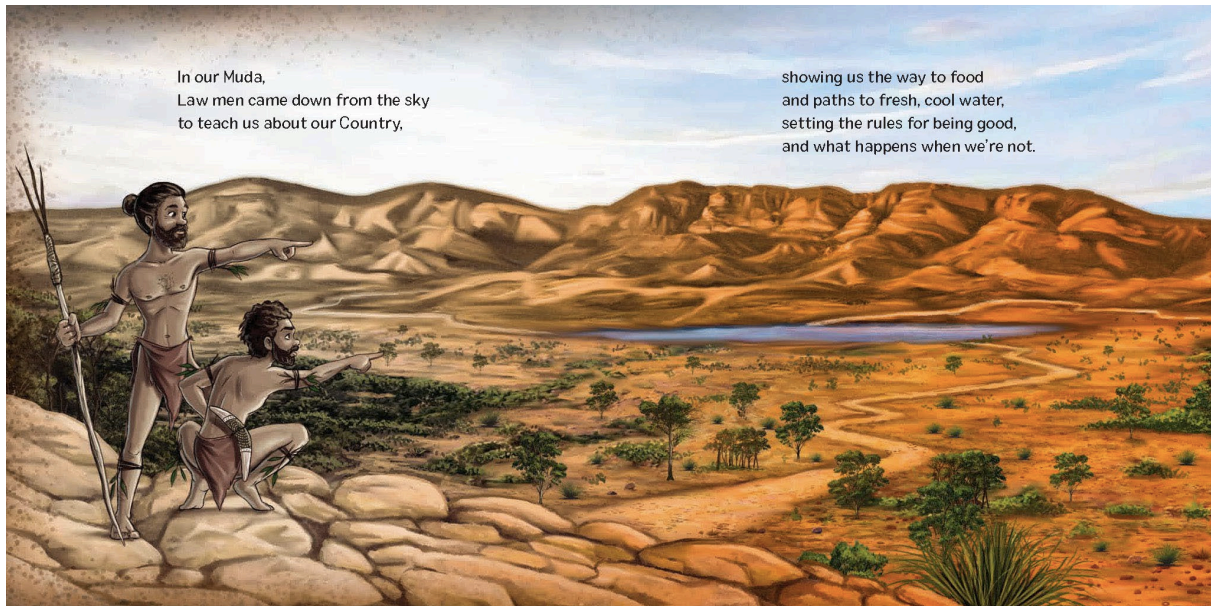
P3: Have you heard of the Dreaming before? What do you think 'way way back in the beginning' means? What do you know about who was here before we were?

Note: Dreaming is how Aboriginal peoples understand the world. It tells the stories of how everything began, like the land, the animals and the people. The Dreaming helps people know how to care for each other and for their Country. These stories aren't just from long ago; they are still alive today. They help connect people to the land, to their families, and to



the way they live.

P4: 'Akurras slithered, carving rivers'. What is an Akurra? An Akurra is an Adnyamathanha Creation spirit.



P5: Muda! That's a new word. What is Muda? Turn to the note from the authors in the front of the book with your students to learn more about the meaning of Muda in Adnyamathanha culture.



P6: On this page, the authors refer to the Creation story 'signalling what's wrong and right'. What stories do you know that have important lessons? Next, think about the history of these Creation stories and ask students, why do we tell stories with lessons and messages?



P8: Who are you? Who is a part of your family? Where do you feel like you belong? For many Aboriginal peoples, the Dreaming involves Creation stories that hold important memories of Ancestors.

Step 4: There are many important themes within these pages. Invite students to respond to the following questions to gather their understanding:

- How would you describe the Dreaming in your own words?
- What special stories do you have of your family members and ancestors?
- What makes you feel connected to your family?

Learning Extension: Expand your students' knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures. Divide students into reading groups and allocate each group a book from the Welcome to Our Country series to read and discuss.

Learning support: Start by reading the book all the way through from beginning to end without facilitating a discussion. This gives students a chance to take in the story and get to know the themes of the book. Then, read it again and follow the activity steps.

Curriculum Links

Foundation

[AC9EFLE01](#) – share ideas about stories, poems and images in literature, reflecting on experiences that are similar or different to their own by engaging with texts by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors and illustrators

[AC9EFLE02](#) – respond to stories and share feelings and thoughts about their events and characters

Year 1

[AC9E1LE01](#) – discuss how language and images are used to create characters, settings and events in literature by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors and illustrators

[AC9E1LE02](#) – discuss literary texts and share responses by making connections with students' own experiences

Year 2

[AC9E2LE01](#) – discuss how characters and settings are connected in literature created by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors and illustrators

Year 3

[AC9E3LE01](#) – discuss characters, events and settings in different contexts in literature by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors and illustrators

[AC9E3LE02](#) – discuss connections between personal experiences and character experiences in literary texts and share personal preferences

Activity 2: The importance of place

Step 1: Read *Dreaming* from beginning to end with your students.

Step 2: After you read the book, pose the following questions to students:

- Who can tell me some different places?
- What is a place?

Explain to students that you are going to read *Dreaming* again but this time, they need to identify each place in the book by writing a list on the whiteboard. Encourage students to use a buzz word such as 'PLACE!' when there is a different setting introduced into the story.

Step 3: After reading, reflect on the list you created on the whiteboard as you bring students together to discuss the following questions:

- What places are in the book?
- Do you recognise any of these places?
- Are they similar to places you know?
- What stories are connected to them?

During your discussion, identify the importance of place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are interconnected with Country. Country is a term used to refer to the 'lands, waters and skies to which they are connected through ancestral ties and family origins' ([source](#)). This term holds various meanings for First Nations peoples, which is reflective of the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the continent.

Invite students to think about the Traditional Owners of your area. In a Think, Pair and Share, guide students to discuss:

- Who are the Traditional Owners of our area?
- What do I know about them?
- What would I like to know about?

Note: For non-Indigenous people, learning about and acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land they live on shows respect for First Nations peoples across Australia. When all children in Australia receive a genuine First Nations education, they gain a deeper understanding of the local Country, cultures, languages, histories, and perspectives. This helps build a more inclusive, respectful and forward-thinking community.

Step 4: As a class, share the [AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia](#) (or another trusted source) to find out whose Country your school is on. Look at the map together, find where your school is, and find the name of the Traditional Owners of your area.

Write the name on the board and say it together as a class. Using a small sticky note, place a marker on the map to show your school's location. Around the map, help students add drawings, words or symbols that show what they've learned about this Country, such as animals, special places, or words like 'respect', 'care' or 'story'. Ask students to think about their connection to this Country:

- How does Country make you feel?
- Where do you feel connected to Country?
- What are your special places?

Step 5: Invite students to reflect on the different places in the book that were connected to Muda, a part of 'never-ending stories shared from lips to ears, far too big for just one book'.

Using this knowledge, ask each student to create an artwork that represents a place that is special to them. This could be their backyard, a park, a holiday spot, or even a part of the school grounds. Encourage them to include:

- features of the land (trees, rocks, rivers, hills)
- living things (animals, plants, fungi)
- colours and patterns that show how it feels to be there (for example, peaceful, exciting, calm).

Learning Extension: Guide students to select their special place by using these questions:

- Why is this place important to you?
- How does this place make you feel?
- What do you do in this place?
- What memories or stories do you have from this place?

Learning Support: Invite students to think deeply about their connection to Country by asking:

- What responsibility do we have to Country?
- How do we care for Country?

Curriculum Links

Foundation

[AC9HSFK03](#) – the features of familiar places they belong to, why some places are special and how places can be looked after

[AC9HSFK04](#) – the importance of Country/Place to First Nations Australians and the Country/Place on which the school is located

Year 1

[AC9HSIK03](#) – the natural, managed and constructed features of local places, and their location

[AC9HSIK04](#) – how places change and how they can be cared for by different groups including First Nations Australians

Year 2

[AC9HS2K03](#) – how places can be spatially represented in geographical divisions from local to regional to state/territory, and how people and places are interconnected across those scales

[AC9HS2K04](#) – the interconnections of First Nations Australians to a local Country/Place

Year 3

[AC9HS3K04](#) – the ways First Nations Australians in different parts of Australia are interconnected with Country/Place

Being, Belonging and Becoming

Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

Children respond to diversity with respect

Activity 3: My Story, My Identity

Step 1: After reading *Dreaming*, explain that the story shows how the Dreaming lives in people. It shapes who they are, their values, their stories, and their connection to the land. Turn to page 9 of the book, read the page and ask students:

- Why is this place important to you?
- How does this place make you feel?
- What do you do in this place?
- What memories or stories do you have from this place?

Step 2: Give students three nested circles (concentric) on a blank sheet.

- Centre circle: 'Me today'
- Middle circle: 'My family and culture'
- Outer circle: 'The places, animals, and stories that shape me'

Explain what each circle means:

- Centre circle – 'Me Today'
Students draw or write things that show who they are right now (for example, age, favourite food, hobbies, favourite animal or toy).
- Middle circle – 'My Family and Culture'
Students include drawings or words to show the people, traditions, stories, food, songs or celebrations important to their family.
- Outer circle – 'My Place and Story'
Students include places that are special to them (for example, their home, a holiday place, school), and any nature, animals or landscapes they feel connected to. They might also include a story or memory that has been passed down or is special to them.

Step 3: After completing their circles, invite students to select a part of the book they connected with the most. In their exercise book, guide students to draw or write about how and why they connect to this part of the text.

Step 4: Invite students to think about how they would like to share their circle story, and provide them with a range of different format options, such as:

- sharing their circle story in a talking circle with the class
- recording a short oral story about one element (for example, a tradition, a place or a family saying)
- writing a few short sentences about one thing that shapes their identity and how it connects to the ideas in *Dreaming*.

Learning Extension: Combine the students' work into a class exhibition titled 'Our Stories, Our Identity', and ask students to draw connections between the matching elements of their class's stories.

Learning Support: Provide sentence starters or picture-based templates (for example, 'My special place is...', 'A story I remember is...').

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[AC9E3LE02](#) – discuss connections between personal experiences and character experiences in literary texts and share personal preferences

ABOUT THE CREATORS

ADAM GOODES is an Adnyamathanha and Narungga man and community leader. He is a former Australian Rules footballer, having achieved the greatest heights in the game, and was named Australian of the Year in 2014 for his public work in the fight against racism and his advocacy in First Nations affairs. Together with his cousin Michael O'Loughlin, Adam founded the GO Foundation, which supports and inspires the next generation of First Nations leaders. With a diploma in Aboriginal Studies and his own children at school and preschool, Adam was motivated to publish a series of books for young children and families about Australia's First Nations history.

ELLIE LAING (nee Southwood) is a communications executive and former journalist, who lives on the lands of the Gammeraygal people on the northern beaches of Sydney with her husband and two sons. When Ellie's eldest son Harvey came home from preschool reciting Acknowledgements of Country and singing Aboriginal lullabies, she was inspired to collaborate with Adam Goodes on a series of books aimed at helping families with young children to talk about Australia's First Nations history. She has recently completed studies in Traditional Aboriginal Cultures.

DAVID HARDY is a Barkindji man, author and artist with more than eight years of animation experience with Walt Disney Animation Studios. Married with two children, he is currently Art Director and Game Art Manager for Lightning Box Games. David has worked on twelve animated feature films, including *The Little Mermaid: Ariel's Beginning*, *The Lion King 3: Hakuna Matata* and *Return to Never Land*. His books for children include *Alfie's Search for Destiny* and *Alfie's Big Wish*, *On the Way to Nana's* (written by Frances and Lindsay Haji-Ali), *The Proud Foots 1: Shaka Shaka Hawaii* (written by Lucas Proudfoot) and *Aussie Kids: Meet Zoe and Zac at the Zoo* (written by Belinda Murrell).



ABOUT THE WRITER OF THE NOTES

More than 175,000 educators trust Cool Australia to bring real-world learning into their classrooms. We provide free lesson plans and accredited online professional development courses centred around environmental, social and economic sustainability topics. Quality teachers have one of the most significant impacts on student learning outcomes; our mission is to support teachers to be the best they can be so that all students have access to high-quality education and a successful future.



We are backed by research and evidence. We know that after using our resources, 98% of students increase their knowledge and awareness of real-world issues, and 93% of students are more likely to take action. Using Cool Australia's resources has a positive impact on teachers: 91% say using our resources has increased their confidence in teaching environmental and social issues.

We partner with organisations that share our passion for education. Together, we create high-quality educational content about contemporary issues. Like us, our partners want our education system to empower students to address big environmental, social and economic challenges. We cover a wide range of topics and upskill educators so they can engage with and empower students.