BRIGHTEST WILD
black &write! Fellowship winner
TANIA CRAMPTON-LARKING
TEACHERS RESOURCES

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Teachers Resources by Cara Shipp

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LOTHIAN Children's Books

INTRODUCTION

Brightest Wild is a lyrical story following a young girl migrating from the United Kingdom and learning about First Nations cultures, what connection to and love for Country mean, and how the climate crisis can't be ignored.

Eleven-year-old Alex is moving from London to the Adelaide Hills, Peramangk Country. After the tragic death of Alex's father, her mother has gotten engaged to a new partner, Art, who lives on the other side of the globe. The new environment is a complete culture shock to Alex, but her mixed Indian and Irish heritage helps her feel open to learning about other cultures and First Nations peoples. Her stepfather's children are Mirning through their mother's side of their family, presenting an opportunity for Alex to understand the local landscape from their point of view. Through an immigrant character's eyes, the author presents to readers a unique and fresh perspective on Country and various cultures across the world.

At first, Alex has trouble settling into her new life. Her stepbrother, Koen, is a prickly teenager in a fraught friendship with a non-Indigenous boy called Eric, who bullies Alex and is ignorant of Koen's cultural heritage. Class bullies make school life difficult, but Alex finds friendship with a local Aboriginal student, Luke. He introduces her to his friends, a Panamanian boy named Santiago and Carla, an Aboriginal girl from a family impacted by the Stolen Generations.

Alex also finds comfort in the bushland surrounding her house, and one particular tree that provides a safe space to play and think. Alex begins to discover the wonder of nature, the deep history of the land, and the grave impacts of the climate crisis.

Author Tania Crampton-Larking is a Mirning woman who won the State Library of Queensland's black&write! Fellowship for the unpublished manuscript of this book, allowing her to have the support of First Nations editors before submitting the manuscript to Hachette for publication.

Highly recommended for 8–12-year-olds.

BEFORE READING THE NOVEL

UNDERSTANDING CONNECTION TO COUNTRY

ACTIVITY: Introduce students to the AIATSIS map of Indigenous Australia.
https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia

Locate the countries connected to this story:
- Kaurna, Adelaide
- Peramangk, Adelaide Hills
- Mirning, Bunda Cliffs, beside the Great Australian Bight
- Whadjuk/Wajuk, Perth

ACTIVITY: Look closely at Perth on the Gambay map.
https://gambay.com.au/

Brightest Wild is set mostly in the Adelaide Hills, Peramangk Country, with some chapters set in Perth, Whadjuk Country. Art's ex-wife lives in Whadjuk Country with their daughter, Kirra. When the characters travel to visit them, Noongar people are mentioned.

Select 'explore the map' on the Gambay home page, search for 'Noongar' and zoom in to see

that there are many different groups within the Noongar language group and Country. They are listed in light blue text, with 'Noongar' in dark blue text. You will see that 'Whadjuk' is the group of Noongar people who live in Perth. See a screenshot of this Gambay search below:

DISCUSSION POINT: Discuss why there are differences between the Gambay and the AIATSIS maps, and why there are different spellings of Wajuk/Whadjuk. This variation in First Nations words is common for a few reasons:

- Colonisation resulted in a lot of First Nations people being displaced and taken from their Country or dying, and this meant some knowledge has been lost or forgotten and then rediscovered and put back together over time. This can sometimes lead to different and conflicting information, and can even lead to disputes between First Nations groups over boundaries, place names and identities.
- First Nations languages were oral languages, passed down through talking and singing. It is hard to write these languages down using the English alphabet, so sometimes we get many different interpretations of spelling.
- There are different terms that are often used to describe First Nations groups collectively, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and Indigenous. Many people prefer their Country names over these terms which group hundreds of Countries' peoples into one group. This is why it's best not to use the acronym when talking about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It's also why we use people-centric language – not 'she is an Aboriginal', but 'she is an Aboriginal person/woman'.
- The capitalisation of the words 'Country', 'Ancestors' and 'Elders' is also preferred.

ACTIVITY: Use the Gambay map to look up place names. Find out the Aboriginal names for Perth, Adelaide and any other places the students are interested in. Discuss why it would be good to acknowledge the Aboriginal place names as well as the non-Aboriginal names.

ACTIVITY: Have students work in small groups to research the cultures, histories and languages of the First Nations groups referred to in this novel. A good starting point can be found at these websites:

Kaurna, Adelaide: https://www.kaurnawarra.org.au/, website by the Kaurna Warra Karrpanthi and Kaurna Warra Pintyanthi organisations, both run by Kaurna Elders
Peramangk, Adelaide Hills: https://www.ahc.sa.gov.au/discover/history-and-heritage, website by the Adelaide Hills Council
Mirning, Great Australian Bight region: https://mirning.org/, website by the Mirning Council of Elders**Whadjuk Noongar, Perth:** https://www.noongarculture.org.au/connection-to-country/, Noongar knowledge website by the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council

Use these resources to help students research the place names, animals and plants of these regions. For example, the 'Kaurna animal names' video gives you some visual clues about the landscape and types of trees in the Adelaide, Kaurna region.

Each group should sketch or collage a visual representation of the region they are researching.

ACTIVITY: After learning about the First Nations connections to the regions in the novel, compare the information to where your students attend school and live.

Is there a local Elders council, cultural centre or group of Indigenous rangers who you could contact to speak with the students? If you are able, take students out to meet with local First Nations people in the local landscape.

DISCUSSION POINT: Discuss what the students have learned in the previous activities and from their research on what First Nations peoples' connection to Country means. Ask students if they have similar feelings about certain places in their own lives. Do they have a special place where they feel a sense of belonging, calm, or connection to their family and history?

For further support, the following resources may be useful in culminating this exploration of 'connection to Country':

- This *Behind the News* special explains connection to Country, land rights, Welcome to Country, seasons and bush foods: https://youtu.be/C9Oi6pJqYcs?feature=shared
- This Common Ground article explains connection to land, plants, animals, totems and sustainability: https://www.commonground.org.au/article/connection-to-animals-and-country

UNDERSTANDING THE STOLEN GENERATIONS

DISCUSSION POINT:

Explain to students:

- When Captain Cook came to Australia, there were severe misunderstandings and fighting between colonisers and First Nations people over the ownership of the land.
- New diseases brought by Europeans had a terrible effect on First Nations people who were not used to these diseases.
- The Government decided to force all First Nations people onto settlements, where Government officials fed them rations, gave them work to do and gave children a Eurocentric education. This meant that First Nations people were moved away from their Country and special places to live, to these settlements, often called missions.
- In most of these settlements, First Nations people were not allowed to speak their language, and they could not go out and hunt for their normal food; they had to eat the food rations provided to them. They had many rules to follow.
- Often, people from different First Nations Countries were put in settlements together, which

could break traditional rules they had about which tribes they married and were friends with, and which tribes they avoided. They usually could not leave the settlement, as the government did not want First Nations people to be out in the main community with other Australian people. This was done in the name of protection, to stop them being hurt in conflicts or by the introduced diseases, but many say it was a form of control and that it moved First Nations people out of the way for the European settlers to take over the land.

- The effect of these settlements or missions was that First Nations people were disconnected from their Country. Sometimes, families were split up and sent to different settlements. Some people lost contact with their families, married non-Indigenous people and lost a lot of their knowledge of their First Nations heritage.
- Despite the negative impacts of colonisation, for First Nations people, continuing connection to Country is of vital importance, as is cultural identity, with values such as family, laws, responsibilities and spirituality remaining strong and continuing for tens of thousands of years.

DISCUSSION POINT: Given what the students have just learned about connection to Country, discuss how this must have felt for the people taken and put on settlements, away from their homeland and the special places they were connected to, their cultural knowledge and their family connections.

DISCUSSION POINT: Return to the earlier discussion point about why some First Nations information, place names and spellings are conflicting. Discuss how this is due to First Nations cultures and languages being lost as a result of colonisation, and then being pieced back together in the modern day. The Stolen Generations is yet another reason for this muddled and conflicting information.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH:

Teachers may wish to select sections from the Australian Museum's 'Unsettled' exhibition. Select resources appropriate to your students' age and capacity as a safe way to enter and debrief conversations about the Stolen Generations, as it is a confronting topic.
https://australian.museum/learn/first-nations/unsettled/surviving-genocide/stolen-generations/

CULTURAL NOTES

Most state government education departments have some guidelines and protocols for teachers working with First Nations students and classroom content. Here is a good example from the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority: https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/about/k-12-policies/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-perspectives/protocols

You can also find information about culturally sensitive teaching on the 'Miss Shipp' blog:
https://missshipp.wordpress.com/five-foundations-of-first-nations-focussed-teaching/
https://missshipp.wordpress.com/culturally-sensitive-teaching/

Best practice is to find ways to connect your unit of work with a real-world experience, meeting local Aboriginal people via incursions and excursions.

A common challenge for educators is locating, contacting and receiving responses from local First Nations community members. This takes time and perseverance and becomes easier once you are known and trusted by community members. Remember that government institutions

and institutions representing non-Aboriginal authority are not safe or happy places for many First Nations people. Here are some tips:

- Start within your school with any identified First Nations roles, parents or Elder/advisory groups. Ask if the school has a Reconciliation Action Plan and any committees or groups who work with First Nations people. It's important never to place students in a place of responsibility or speaking for First Nations people until you know them and their families – start by getting to know the parents and what they want/expect from the school for their young person.
- Contact local Aboriginal land councils, local Indigenous rangers, Aboriginal medical services or cultural centres.
- Attend bookshop, library, art gallery and museum events on First Nations topics, as they will have authors, artists, guest speakers and community members you can talk to.
- Attend local NAIDOC events and be seen around the community.
- Be aware that some people may be the only First Nations representative or the only person in that liaison role, so could be inundated with community work and slow to respond to you.
- Seek opportunities to be introduced to people in person via networks and community activities rather than emails and phone calls.
- Persist – please don't leave a message or write one email, then give up and say no-one is interested in working with you. It's about finding the right moment to connect and build trust.
- Create a culturally safe space for visitors – be welcoming of more than one guest, as they may prefer to attend school with colleagues, friends and family. Initial meetings may need to take place away from school, in a neutral location or somewhere of their choice. Ask guests how they want to be introduced and plan with them how a session/workshop/meeting will run so that everyone is clear on what is expected. Check what location they would prefer and how they want the space set up (sitting in a circle, sitting outside, walking through the bush, etc.). Remunerate appropriately with a pre-agreed fee and present a small thank you gift. Ensure that there is time for yarning when you meet with them and after they deliver a workshop (book relief time for yourself to host them attentively or arrange for someone off class to assist).

THEMES AND CURRICULUM LINKS

Major themes in this novel include:

- The importance of friendship
- The impact of bullying and racism on people's confidence and sense of belonging
- Connection to Country and how all people can feel this connection and care for land, skies and waters
- The impact of the climate crisis on our environment, our health and our lives
- The importance of fighting for what is right: standing up to bullies, not being a bystander of bullying and demanding action on community issues such as climate change
- The potential of First Nations knowledges for addressing climate challenges and bringing us back in harmony with the land
- The importance of culture, language, connection to place and family to one's identity and sense of self

The curriculum links for this novel are outlined below. It fits most naturally in the Year 4 curriculum, providing a First Nations perspective on colonisation to complement the First Fleet content in Year 4 History. While not included in these notes, teachers could also expand further on the aspects of connection to Country and environmental sustainability, and explore **Science Understanding | Biological Sciences**: animals, habitats, First Nations connection to the ecosystem and world views on the interdependence of Earth's systems (AC9S4U01).

Year level	Curriculum area
Year 4	English | Literature • AC9E4LE01 Recognise similar storylines, ideas and relationships in different contexts in literary texts by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors • AC9E4LE02 Describe the effects of text structures and language features in literary texts when responding to and sharing opinions • AC9E4LE03 Discuss how authors and illustrators make stories engaging by the way they develop character, setting and plot tensions English | Literacy • AC9E4LY02 Listen for key points and information to carry out tasks and contribute to discussions, acknowledging another opinion, linking a response to the topic, and sharing and extending ideas and information • AC9E4LY03 Identify the characteristic features used in imaginative, informative and persuasive texts to meet the purpose of the text • AC9E4LY05 Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning, to expand topic knowledge and ideas, and evaluate texts History • AC9HS4K01 The diversity of First Nations Australians, their social organisation and their continuous connection to Country/Place • AC9HS4K04 The effects of contact with other people on First Nations Australians and their Countries/Places following the arrival of the First Fleet and how this was viewed by First Nations Australians as an invasion • AC9HS4K05 The importance of environments, including natural vegetation and water sources, to people and animals in Australia and on another continent • AC9HS4K06 Sustainable use and management of renewable and non-renewable resources, including the custodial responsibility First Nations Australians have for Country/Place • AC9HS4K07 The differences between “rules” and “laws”, why laws are important and how they affect the lives of people • AC9HS4K08 The roles of local government and how members of the community use and contribute to local services • AC9HS4K09 Diversity of cultural, religious and/or social groups to which they and others in the community belong, and their importance to identity • AC9HS4S06 Propose actions or responses to an issue or challenge that consider possible effects of actions Health and Physical Education • AC9HP4P01 Investigate how success, challenge, setbacks and failure strengthen resilience and identities in a range of contexts • AC9HP4P03 Describe how choices and actions can be influenced by stereotypes • AC9HP4P05 Describe how valuing diversity influences wellbeing and identify actions that promote inclusion in their communities Science • AC9S4H01 Examine how people use data to develop scientific explanations • AC9S4H02 Consider how people use scientific explanations to meet a need or solve a

Year 5	English | Literature • AC9E5LE01 Identify aspects of literary texts that represent details or information about historical, social and cultural contexts in literature by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors • AC9E5LE02 Present an opinion on a literary text using specific terms about literary devices, text structures and language features, and reflect on the viewpoints of others • AC9E5LE04 Examine the effects of imagery, including simile, metaphor and personification, and sound devices in narratives, poetry and songs English | Literacy • AC9E5LY02 Use appropriate interaction skills including paraphrasing and questioning to clarify meaning, make connections to own experience, and present and justify an opinion or idea • AC9E5LY05 Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning to evaluate information and ideas History • AC9HS5K02 The impact of the development of British colonies in Australia on the lives of First Nations Australians, the colonists and convicts, and on the natural environment • AC9HS5K05 The management of Australian environments, including managing severe weather events such as bushfires, floods, droughts or cyclones, and their consequences • AC9HS5K07 How citizens (members of communities) with shared beliefs and values work together to achieve a civic goal • AC9HS5S06 Propose actions or responses to issues or challenges and use criteria to assess the possible effects Health and Physical Education • AC9HP6P01 Explain how identities can be influenced by people and places, and how we can create positive self-identities • AC9HP6P04 Describe and demonstrate how respect and empathy can be expressed to positively influence relationships • AC9HP6P10 Analyse how behaviours influence the health, safety, relationships and wellbeing of individuals and communities • AC9S5H02 Investigate how scientific knowledge is used by individuals and communities to identify problems, consider responses and make decisions Music • AC9AMU6E02 Explore ways First Nations Australians use music to continue and revitalise culture

Year 6	English | Language • AC9E6LA08 Identify authors' use of vivid, emotive vocabulary, such as metaphors, similes, personification, idioms, imagery and hyperbole English | Literature • AC9E6LE01 Identify responses to characters and events in literary texts, drawn from historical, social or cultural contexts, by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors English | Literacy • AC9E6LY02 Use interaction skills and awareness of formality when paraphrasing, questioning, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, and sharing and evaluating information, experiences and opinions • AC9E6LY05 Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning, and to connect and compare content from a variety of sources History • AC9HS6S06 Propose actions or responses to issues or challenges and use criteria to assess the possible effects Health and Physical Education • AC9HP6P01 Explain how identities can be influenced by people and places, and how we can create positive self-identities • AC9HP6P04 Describe and demonstrate how respect and empathy can be expressed to positively influence relationships • AC9HP6P10 Analyse how behaviours influence the health, safety, relationships and wellbeing of individuals and communities • AC9S5H02 Investigate how scientific knowledge is used by individuals and communities to identify problems, consider responses and make decisions Music • AC9AMU6E02 Explore ways First Nations Australians use music to continue and revitalise culture

Cross Curriculum Priorities: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures; Sustainability

CURRICULUM ACTIVITIES

CLASSROOM IDEAS IN ENGLISH

PRE-READING, BOOK ORIENTATION

- Consider the dedication the author has written at the beginning of the book: *for our one planet*. Ask the students: What does this mean to you? What do you think the author might be trying to say? Consider how this sets us up to expect a story that deals with environmental issues in some way. Activate prior knowledge and brainstorm what students already know about climate change, climate emergencies and the need for action to save our planet.
- Read the start of the first chapter, 'Changed Worlds', up to 'he's not behind me anymore' in the first paragraph of p.2. Discuss what you know about Alex already. Identify facts that you can infer from the paragraphs. For example, what does 'We're heading to the other side of the planet, but not for a holiday' imply? Alex is having recurring nightmares, her hands are shaky, and in the nightmare, her father disappears. What do these things imply? Consider

how effectively the author conveys so much of Alex's backstory in a few lines.

LITERARY DEVICES AND WRITER'S STYLE

- Discuss the use of this **simile**: 'Papa stopped like a broken clock' (p. 2). What does this suggest about his death? How does the imagery help give this impression?
- There are some key instances of **imagery** to describe the Australian landscape in the novel. Discuss their effectiveness in painting a picture in the reader's mind. Go outside or on an excursion to a local special place, then try sketching and describing it.
  - pp. 15–18
  - pp. 117–118
- **Symbolism**: There are recurring images of the fake tattoos Koen draws on himself:
  - animal skulls and koalas falling into graves (p. 8)
  - kangaroo with scared eyes (p. 60)
  - sparkling blue and green earth (pp. 221–222)
- Discuss what these images might represent. Discuss how the changes in images might signal how Koen's mood or outlook on life is changing.
- **Character arc**: Alex starts the novel doing a lot of wishing and regretting and wanting to go back to her past life, then becomes more 'in the moment' as she begins to enjoy her new surroundings and be at one with the bush. By the end, she becomes an activist, proactive, fighting for what she believes in and for awareness around climate change, and thinking about the future. Have students find quotes and examples of these three phases as Alex develops and grows. They can sketch or collage some imagery to represent their chosen quotes and phrases that show the progression of the character.

GENERAL DISCUSSION POINTS

- When Alex first moves to Australia, it is a culture shock – it is very different to what she knows. Discuss some key events and quotes from the first chapters:
  - When her new family teaches her the trick of dripping ice water on her head in the hot car, and she wonders how she will explain this to her friend Preeta (pp. 14–15)
  - When she sees terrace homes like in London but notices they are sitting on 'brownish-yellow land' and 'under a cloudless pale blue sky' (p. 16)
  - When she says 'everything here is a warm colour', 'the birds are even louder than traffic' and 'the sky looks bigger' (pp. 17–18)
  - Describing sweat dripping down her nose, she says 'everything feels a little upside down' (p. 27)

THEMES: RACISM AND BULLYING AND CLIMATE CHANGE

- Discuss the characters of Eric, Jason and Trout. Discuss examples of when they make racist comments or gestures, and other examples of bullying behaviour. To get you started, look at:
  - Eric: p. 23, p. 86
  - Jason and Trout: p. 92, p. 220
  - General comments on racism, pp. 82).
- What is the impact of these kids' behaviour on the other children in the class and on Alex? Why don't people stand up to them? How do they get away with this behaviour?
- In the acknowledgements, the author describes herself as having been 'a young person, feeling like a downtrodden outsider' due to racism, and says she looked to role models for strength and inspiration – famous Aboriginal women such as Evonne Goolagong Cawley and Cathy Freeman. Share *This Book Thinks Ya Deadly!* by Corey Tutt with students. Students could select different people to study and summarise/share what they learn with the class.
  - Discuss why it is important to see role models in your own community, race or culture. Encourage students to discuss connection to self. Do they ever feel downtrodden because of race, difference, age or gender? If they are too shy to discuss, this could be a private journal topic or a Think-Pair-Share activity.

- Discuss how things change for Alex when she makes friends. As her friendships grow stronger, notice how she is less bothered by the bullying behaviour of others. As their relationships strengthen (Koen and Alex, Luke and Alex, Trout and Luke), notice how characters become more willing to call out the bullying behaviour. Discuss why this is the case and reflect on the strength that friendship can give you.
- Discuss stories of the bushfire experience in the novel (pp. 155–156). Your students and community may have first-hand experience with bushfires. If appropriate, discuss and share experiences. If appropriate, view the *Behind the News* special on bushfires during the 2019 disaster in NSW and QLD: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsG_nLSURxM (Note there are links to related stories on this YouTube page.) Discuss the worries, fears and hopes of students in relation to fires and other natural disasters. What action can students take in their community to address these issues?

CLASSROOM IDEAS IN STUDIES OF SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT OR HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

- Discuss the symbols that Koen and Kirra have carved on the old gum tree (pp. 186–187). This may mirror ancient practices of carving symbols on trees as signposts and messages. See the State Library of NSW archived exhibition from 2011 on 'Carved trees': https://www2.sl.nsw.gov.au/archive/events/exhibitions/2011/carved_trees/
- The story takes place in Adelaide and Perth. In Boorloo (Perth), Alex is taught about some local First Nations place names and local knowledges. Then Kirra talks about her family's ancestral home, where the Mirning live, and their totem, whales (p. 146). Miro's speech discusses the importance of listening to Indigenous knowledges as well (pp. 218–219), and as noted above, one of Koen and Kirra's symbols represents controlled fire and cool burns to look after Country. Read the picture book *Looking After Country with Fire* by Victor Steffensen, which has a song at the back and a QR code to listen to it. Discuss why Indigenous knowledges might help us address climate issues. Discuss how Indigenous knowledges and culture can be transmitted through song and how effective this could be for young people learning about traditional practices.
- Carla explains Australian history to Alex and tells her about the Stolen Generations (pp. 93–94). Discuss this section – is there anything students hadn't heard about before? What impact do they think this history has had on families like Carla's? Think about ways in which a sense of identity and belonging might be lost if separated from your family and community. Read the picture book *Fair Skin Black Fella* by Renee Fogorty. Discuss how we might support other Aboriginal people who have fair skin, are from mixed descent or whose families have been disconnected from their people and culture in the past.
- Alex is interested to learn about the meanings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags from Koen (pp. 66–67). Allow students to research this topic further and share their findings with the class.
- The author gives thanks to the Wilderness Society and youth activists around the globe. Look at and discuss some examples of youth activism:
    - https://www.aycc.org.au/
    - https://www.unicef.org/stories/young-climate-activists-demand-action-inspire-hope
    - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oq-14b18Lng

  Discuss how easy or hard it would be to do what these young activists have done. Ask your students: If they were going to take action for change in the world, what would it be for? In groups, students can select an issue and discuss a proposed action plan for how they would seek change and solutions for it. Students can suggest their own issue of interest or pick one of the following: racism; climate crisis; bushfire; global warming; ozone layer; bullying; mining, overfishing and other practices disturbing ecosystems and endangering animals.
- The author of this novel is also an activist and takes photographs depicting nature's beauty, makes videos on YouTube and TikTok, and has written another book, *Super-nature Stars*.

Look at examples of her work and discuss how she conveys her messages through writing and other visual forms. Is it effective? What are these messages?

https://www.tiktok.com/@shyinnature
https://taniacathy123.wixsite.com/my-site
https://www.youtube.com/@Tania.Crampton-Larking

CLASSROOM IDEAS IN SCIENCE

- Alex talks about wind and its properties and purpose (p. 55–6). Research more about the topic of wind in Earth Sciences (see *Natural Geographic* article on wind by Turgeon & Morse, 2024: https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/wind/). Discuss sustainable energy solutions and the harnessing of wind power, and link this to the novel's themes to do with climate change and action.
- Alex learns what a relationship with trees can give you. She talks on p. 51 about the well-known benefits of talking to plants; Koen and Kirra carved symbols to do with photosynthesis on their big gum tree (p. 187); and Alex talks about the trees communicating (p. 153). Invite students to research further about what trees do for our environment, what they do for human mental health and wellbeing, and different cultural beliefs about talking to trees or trees communicating with each other or with humans. Take students for a walk and find trees to sit under quietly. Students can complete botanical sketches of trees, leaves, flowers and other small plants in the area.
- The author refers to the Guna people, whom she visited on school exchange, and the Panama protests of 2023. The character Santiago is from Panama. Alex also thinks about Indian climate disasters and the role of First Nations people across the world in fighting for the Earth (p. 168–170). Students can research a country of interest and find out what climate change impacts are being seen there, and what actions First Nations people in those places are taking. Students can complete an investigative report and interpret and present data from their research. Some articles to support students are listed below:
  - https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/28/panama-supreme-court-canadian-copper-mine-unconstitutional
  - https://www.sciencenews.org/article/indigenous-guna-panama-escape-rising-seas
  - https://www.voanews.com/a/study-finds-rains-that-led-to-deadly-indian-landslides-were-made-worse-by-climate-change-/7742092.html
  - Canadian Indigenous climate action organisation: https://www.indigenousclimateaction.com/

CLASSROOM IDEAS IN HEALTH AND PE

- Discuss with students the definition of 'stereotypes'. What does it mean when someone is stereotyping another person or group of people? How can stereotypes influence the way people treat others?
- Discuss how Trout, Jason and Eric treat Alex and Luke. What are some of the racist and mean things they say? Are these things based on stereotypes?
- How do Trout and Luke change in the novel as they stand up to Jason and move away from being near to/taking part in bullying behaviours? Has their own wellbeing improved by them acting with more respect toward others?
- Research bullying, racism and their impacts on mental health. Locate data and statistics about how they impact young people in our community.
- What actions can we take to promote inclusion in the community? For example, look at some of the resources on the Bullying No Way website: https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/
- Discuss the challenges, setbacks or failures that Koen and Alex come up against in the novel. Identify how they overcome these, what they think and say to themselves, and what

they do to build their resilience.
- Assist students with designing social action projects for encouraging their student community to embrace diversity and be respectful and empathetic.

CLASSROOM IDEAS IN ARTS – MUSIC AND VISUAL ARTS

- Discuss the song that Koen creates for the protest march. In what ways is it demonstrating Koen's responsibility for caring for Country?
- Research First Nations musicians and find a song and lyrics that demonstrate connection to Country or teach cultural knowledge. Below are just a few examples:
  - Yothu Yindi
  - King Stingray
  - Thelma Plum
  - Emma Donovan
  - Jessica Mauboy
  - Mitch Tambo
  - Electric Fields
  - Dan Sultan
  - Troy Cassar-Daley
  - Miiesha
  - Spinifex Gum
  - Coloured Stone
  - No Fixed Address
  - Briggs
  - A.B. Original
  - Baker Boy
  - Archie Roach
  - Yung Warriors
  - Melanie Mununggurr and Steven Oliver (slam poets)
- Discuss how art can be used for protest, to revitalise culture and to teach about important concepts. See the National Gallery of Australia's article on NAIDOC and the art of protest: https://nga.gov.au/on-demand/naidoc-and-the-art-of-protest/
- https://www.portrait.gov.au/portraits/2021.54/bart-willoughby-no-fixed-address-at-the-national-land-rights-action-march
- https://www.fightforthebight.org.au/news/2017/10/3/mirrdinjar-uncle-bunnas-message
- https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/earshot/the-story-behind-black-boy/6969804
- Students can create a song or artwork addressing a social issue of importance to them, such as caring for Country, climate change, racism or bullying.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tania Crampton-Larking is a proud Mirning woman who writes to inspire others to connect with Nature's vibrant, timeless beauty. She seeks to promote caring values that are opposed to destructive ignorance and racism. She is passionate about fighting for the preservation and restoration of Earth's healthy natural systems, and for a future that is safe, magical and sacred for all.

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