

Crow and the Waterhole

Ambelin Kwaymullina

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Synopsis

This book is the story of a crow who is not happy. She sees her own reflection in the waterhole beneath the tree in which she lives, but believes she is looking at another bird. She begins a journey in which she has many adventures and helps other creatures she meets along the way.

As she journeys, Crow keeps seeing her reflection in bodies of water, but always mistakes it for another crow. Finally, a kookaburra tells her that the bird she is looking at is herself. Crow realizes that she has been staring at her own reflection all along, and flies back to her tree by the waterhole. Crow is then able to pass the wisdom she has learned on to others – to see the good qualities in themselves.

Themes

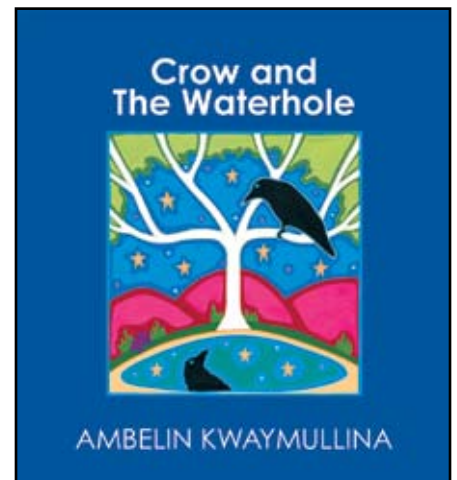
Crow and the Waterhole explores issues of self-worth and self-perception. It examines the importance of helping others, and of journeying and working to discover your own strengths.

Writing Style

Crow and the Waterhole is written in the tradition of Aboriginal teaching stories. Its simple, lyrical, fable-like language reinforces the underlying message of the book. The vibrant illustrations are painted using gouache.

Author Motivation

'This story came to me in a dream. One night when I went to sleep, I dreamed about a bird looking into a pool of water, thinking another bird was looking back at her. When I woke, I wrote down what I had dreamed on a piece of paper. As time passed, I began to see more and more images in my head of a bird, looking into different bodies of water and always thinking it was another bird looking back. Eventually these images became the story of *Crow and the Waterhole*.'



Author / Illustrator Background

Ambelin Kwaymullina is an Indigenous writer and artist. She comes from the Bailgu and Nyamal peoples of the Pilbara region of Western Australia. Her mother is acclaimed Indigenous writer and artist, Sally Morgan. This was her first book.

Editorial Comment

Crow and the Waterhole is an inspiring and uplifting picture book for younger readers from an exciting new author/illustrator.

Study Notes

1. Write to the author of your favourite book, or of this book (if to Ambelin Kwaymullina, send the letter c/o Fremantle Press) describing what you did and didn't like.
2. Write an alternative blurb for the book and another title for the book.
3. Act out the story.
4. Substitute the crow for another animal. Does it change the meaning of the book?
5. Draw your own version of a scene from the book.
6. The illustrations are made up of simple shapes, without black outlines. Try drawing a picture using the same technique.
7. Discuss the importance of the illustrations to the story. Would the story work just as well with different illustrations?
8. Find the frog in each illustration.
9. Brainstorm and make a list of as many birds as possible.
10. Choose a bird, and describe what you know about it.
11. Write a poem or song about the bird.
12. Draw a picture of the bird.
13. Go on an excursion to a local park, wildlife park or the avian section of the zoo. Sketch or watch a particular bird.
14. Research issues affecting local birdlife – reduced habitat, water resources, feral species. Research the effects of fire on native vegetation.
15. Discuss the nature of reflections. Is a mirror image the same as a positive image? How might they differ?
16. Investigate what other surfaces are reflective and why.
17. Make a list of the things you like about yourself and/or about someone else.
18. Make a list of things you'd like someone (a parent/sibling) to change.
19. Read other Indigenous crow books (*How Crows Became Black*, *The story of crow: a Nyul Nyul story*, *Wargan the crow*).
20. Discuss the role of teaching stories. Do other cultures use teaching stories? Do you know any other teaching stories?
21. Locate the Pilbara on a map of Australia.
22. Find out more about the Bailgu and Njamal people and/or the Indigenous people from your area.
23. Invite a spokesperson from the local Indigenous community to speak to the class.