

Barlay!

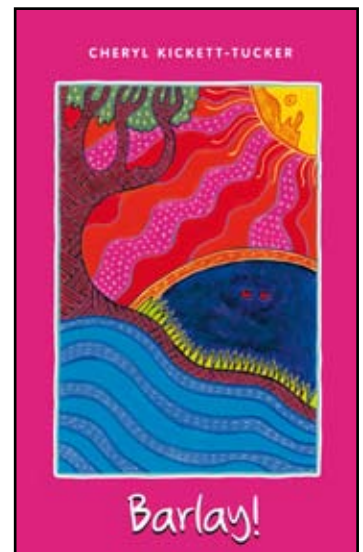
Cheryl Kickett-Tucker

illustrations by Sally Morgan and Tracey Gibbs

Waarda series editor: Sally Morgan

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Synopsis

Sometimes grown ups tell scary stories to teach kids a lesson. And sometimes those scary stories turn out to be true. When nan tells her grandchildren about the *woordatj* they have different reactions — Jay and Rene pretend they are too tough to be scared, but Sarah knows she ought to be cautious of a magical creature like the *woordatj*.

When the family visit Rocky Pool for a picnic, Sarah, Jay and Rene find out the hard way how true their nan's *woordatj* story is. Despite their nan's warnings, the boys become careless, and when Rene falls into the water he has to be rescued. Later, when the family goes on a bush walk, the children learn how to leave a trail ... but they lose track of the time, and when they return it is almost sunset — the time when the *woordatj* comes out. They make a quick escape, leaving two blinking red eyes in the cave behind them.

About the Waarda series

Waarda, Noongar for talking and sharing stories and information, is an exciting new Indigenous children's series. Edited by Sally Morgan, the series is designed to support the literacy needs of Indigenous children in primary school, by making available to them stories written by Indigenous authors. At the same time, it will introduce non-Indigenous children to the richness and depth of Indigenous storytelling. Above all, it is a collection of fun, interesting and diverse first chapter books for new readers.

Writing Style

The story is told in the third-person, but primarily from the perspective of Sarah, the young girl in the story. The text uses a lot of dialogue, as well as descriptions of the landscape. A key feature of the writing style is the use of Noongar words (with English translations).

Themes

Family relationships are a central part of this story, in particular the knowledge that is passed on through elders. The teaching of traditional stories is explored through the story

of the *woordatj*, which itself teaches about being careful in the bush. The element of nature is therefore an important theme too.

About the Author

Cheryl Kickett-Tucker belongs to three areas of the Noongar people — Wadjuk (Swan River), Balladong (Wheatbelt) and Yued (Moora). Cheryl's story was inspired by the tales she tells her children, and also by the legends her mother has passed on to her.

Cheryl Kickett-Tucker's professional activities have not previously included writing for children: she is Director of Pindi Pindi, The National Research Centre for Aboriginal Children, Families and Community; a Post Doctoral Research Fellow at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research; and an Associate Professor at Murdoch University. Her work in social psychology focuses on Indigenous children and youths, particularly those living in urban settings. She also has a Master of Science, a Bachelor of Applied Science and an Associate Diploma of Applied Science.

Cheryl has received numerous awards including National NAIDOC Scholar of the Year in 2001 and the Queens Trust Award for Young Australians, WA in both 1992 and 1995. She previously played state basketball for Western Australia.

Study Notes

Pre-reading

- Look at the book and think about the impression it gives you before reading.
- Using the cover illustration to guide you, what do you think the title means? Have you ever heard the word 'barlay' before?
- Based on the cover illustration and the title together, what do you expect the book to be about?
- Write, draw or tell your own story called *Barlay!* using just the title and cover illustration as your starting point.

Read the back cover blurb.

- Does this change your ideas about the book?
- Does the blurb make you want to read the book? Why/why not?

After Reading

Structure and presentation

- After reading the story look again at the cover illustration.
- Which elements of the story are illustrated on the cover? Why do you think the illustrator chose to paint those elements?
- Write an alternative blurb for the story.
- How important are the internal illustrations to your understanding of the story?

- Draw your own pictures (not necessarily based on those in the book) of Sarah, Nan, Jay, Rene, Mum and Dad.

This is a short chapter book.

- Why do you think the story is divided into chapters? How do the chapters generally begin and end?

The story is told in the third person, but principally from Sarah's point of view.

- How might the story have been different if it was told from Nan's point of view, or Rene's?
- Choose one chapter and rewrite it from the perspective of one of the other characters.

Family

There are three generations in Sarah's family: grandmother, parents and children (or grandchildren).

- How many generations are there in your family? How many family members do you live with?
- Draw a family tree of several generations of your family. You may have to take this project home and ask your parents and grandparents about your family.
- Who tells you stories in your family? What kinds of stories do your grandmother/grandfather tell you?
- Think of a story one of your elder family members have told you and re-tell it to the person next to you.

Think of a trip your family has taken together, perhaps in school holidays.

- Where did you go?
- What did you do?
- What was your favourite thing about this trip?
- Did anything happen that taught you a lesson about what to do/not to do?

Think of a time when you didn't do as your parents or grandparents (or other elder family member) told you, and something went wrong as a result.

- Why were you warned against doing the thing you did?
- Was anybody hurt?
- Did you do the same thing again later?
- Why do you think older people sometimes tell you what to do/not to do?

Warning/message stories

Cautionary tales have a long history.

- Can you think of other stories that have important messages?
- Choose one of your favourites. Retell the story in a few paragraphs.
- What is the overall message of this story? Why do you think it might have been told?

The story of *Barlay!* contains the story of the *woordatj* within it.

- What is the message of the *woordatj* story?

- Use your own words to explain the message of the story of *Barlay!*
- What is the same, and what is different about the overall messages of both stories?

Creative craft

Use your imagination to create your very own creature that lives in the Australian bush.

Ideas for creations may include:

- Puppet
- Song (with lyrics)
- Story
- Painting (bark painting/acrylic/water/sand)
- Collage (using any materials, preferably recycled)
- Music (no lyrics)
- Drawing
- Poem
- Advertisement
- News story (to be read out like on TV or in the newspaper)
- Dance
- Creature made from clay, lego, newspaper, leaves, twigs, cardboard etc.

Consider the following questions when you make your creature:

- What does your creature look like?
- What does it sound like?
- What does it smell like?
- What does it feel like?
- What does it drink?
- What does it eat?
- What magical skill does your creature have?
- Where does your creature live?
- What is unique about your creature?
- Why is it important for others to know about your creature?

Imagine that in fifty years time you are a grandparent. Using your creature, what story will you tell your grandchildren? Consider the following:

- Language (use your own language, e.g. Italian, Noongar, Chinese, in parts of the story)
- Illustrations
- Moral/what should be learnt
- If you have made a book, be creative with the title and cover so that you capture your audience
- Don't write too much
- Have an ending that will keep your audience engaged
- Have fun!

Noongar language

Did you know that prior to British settlement there were about 230 Aboriginal languages, with between 500 and 600 dialects being spoken throughout Australia? Now, as few as 20-30 languages are considered to be healthy; most of these come from the Kimberley,

Arnhem Land and Central Australia. For some of these 'healthy' languages, there remain only 40-50 speakers. Despite the strength of some languages, many are weakened and fading fast.

[Teacher's note: find definitions of 'dialect' and explain its difference to 'language'.]

- What is the Indigenous language of the region in which you live?
- What is the dialect of this language in the particular area in which you live?
- 'Yonga' is the word for kangaroo in the Balladong dialect of the Noongar language. What is the word for kangaroo in the Indigenous language (or dialect) of your area?
- Draw a line down the middle of a page, to create two columns. Make a word list of the words in the book that appear in two languages, with each English word on one side and its Noongar equivalent on the other side.
- Invite a Noongar (or other Indigenous language) language teacher or specialist to your classroom to teach about the language.
- Look at other books that use Aboriginal language, e.g. *Bawoo Stories* by May O'Brien.

Nature

Sarah loves to visit Rocky Pool, and she especially loves the swimming hole and the bridge, and watching the noisy galahs and parrots among the red and yellow flowers of the gum trees.

- Do you have a favourite outdoors place to visit? Maybe it's a particular beach, or in the hills, or somebody's garden. Write a page describing this place, and your favourite things about it.
- Create a 3-dimensional model of Rocky Pool. You will need scissors, glue, coloured paper, wool, cellophane, bark and anything else you will find useful.
- If you don't want to re-create Rocky Pool, you can choose to create a model of your the outdoor place which you described before.
- Where is the Darling Scarp? Research.
- The Kuljak National Park is fictional, but refers to an actual national park in the Darling Scarp. Can you work out what its real name is?
- Find a map of Perth and its surrounding areas. Trace this map and identify the places mentioned in *Barlay!*
- Draw a picture of one of the animals that appears (or is mentioned) in *Barlay!*

Picnics

Describe your ideal picnic.

- Where would it be?
- Who would you invite?
- What would you pack in the basket?

Nan cooks damper for the family's picnic.

- Have you eaten damper before? If so, how do you like to eat it?
- Find a recipe for damper and cook it yourself.

Indigenous Story-telling

- Are Indigenous stories different to other kinds of stories you've read?
- In what ways are they different? In what ways are they similar?

- Invite a local Indigenous spokesperson to come and talk to the class about their people's storytelling and culture.
- Arrange for a language lesson in the Indigenous language of your local area.

Aboriginal perspectives

There are substantial resources for exploring Aboriginal perspectives across the curriculum available at:

<http://www.det.wa.edu.au/education/abled/apac/lessons/index.html>

<http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/primary/hsie/crosscurriculum/aboriginal/index.htm>

<http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/indigenous/>

<http://wwwfp.education.tas.gov.au/English/abtorres.htm>

<http://www.aboriginaleducation.sa.edu.au/pages/Educators/>

<http://www.batchelor.edu.au/>

<http://batchelorpress.com/>