

## A Cyclone is Coming!

Darlene Oxenham

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Waarda series editor: Sally Morgan

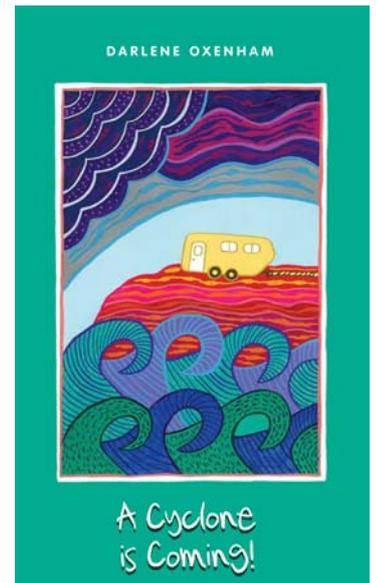
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Themes: Indigenous, Family and Home Stories, Adventure, Multicultural

Year levels: Y1, Y2, Y3, Y4, Y5

Cross Curriculum: Ol.Indigenous



### About the Waarda series

Waarda, Nyungar 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.

### About the Book

Annie is a young girl who lives with her family in a small coastal town called Useless Loop. Her aunt, uncles and grandparents all live next door to Annie and her parents, and the kids in this town are all friends.

Annie's grandfather is in charge of bringing drinking water for everyone and when he returns with his truck, Annie visits him along with her dog, Patches. As Pop observes the sky and the sea he tells her a cyclone is coming.

Cyclones are not unusual at Useless Loop and everyone seems to know what to do. But Annie has never been through one before and she's about to find out how to prepare for it. Dad explains the damage cyclones cause, but reassures Annie that all will be okay if they prepare and think of it as an adventure. Annie helps Dad tie their caravan to a scraper so that it doesn't blow away. She helps Mum tape up the windows and collect all loose items. Together, her family carefully prepares for what's to come. Then there is nothing left to do but wait.

When the cyclone, named Cyclone Tessie, finally hits Useless Loop, the family gathers in the kitchen, which is the safest place in their caravan home. The sky darkens and the rain gets stronger and louder. Although Annie is scared, her parents help her stay calm. Together they eat, read and watch movies while the wind howls and the caravan sways. Their dog Patches is fast asleep but Annie is too scared.

Finally Annie, too, falls asleep – and when she wakes up it's all over. The wind and rain have stopped. Together with her relatives and friends, she explores the damage caused by the cyclone and all the things it has blown around. Back at school the next day, the children recount the events of the great cyclone adventure.

### About the Author

Darlene Oxenham is a Malgana woman from Shark Bay on the coast of Western Australia. Her stories in the Waarda series were inspired by her time growing up in Useless Loop. Darlene has worked in Higher Education for over twenty years and is a Professor at the School of Indigenous Studies at The University of Western Australia.

### Themes

Family, community and cooperation – While Annie is the story's central character, her relationships with family and friends are emphasised. Her extended family is a natural and vital part of Annie's everyday life. The story shows that the strength of a family and a community is in working together and helping each other. We see this when: Annie's grandad brings water for everyone; Annie helps her uncles clean up Nan's caravan; Mum and Dad reassure Annie and they all prepare for the cyclone together; the town's kids all stick together when they wander around town.



Safety and preparation – The story teaches children that some dangerous situations require an emergency response, and that it is important to do this calmly, cooperatively and with thorough preparation. Children do not need to live in a cyclone- or flood-prone area to benefit from this message; rather, the book can help all children face the prospect of danger with awareness and confidence.

A positive attitude – Annie's father suggests she thinks of the cyclone as an adventure. Through gentle reassurance and practical actions, Annie's parents show her ways to keep calm and use the opportunity to learn more about cyclones.

## Writing Style

The story is written in a journal style in the present tense. It is narrated by the character of Annie in the first-person point of view. This gives the story a sense of immediacy, and builds tension as the reader goes through the cyclone experience moment-by-moment together with Annie. Her voice is conversational and familiar, which helps young readers to follow the story.

There is some use of dialogue, which shows young readers the standard presentation of conversation in books. Dialogue can also be useful for children who are learning to read aloud as they can be encouraged to experiment with voice and expression to make the story more interesting.

The book also includes two snippets from radio broadcasts (pp. 23–24 and 28–29). These will familiarise children with more official public language, especially news and instructions.

Each chapter is well supported by illustrations which help maintain comprehension through the longer text. The use of chapter titles which reflect the events of each chapter can be used as a prompt to help less confident readers keep track of the story in their memory as they read.

## Study Notes

### Vocabulary

Children may not be familiar with some of the words in the story, especially with things they may never have seen before such as a 'scraper' or 'annexe'. Some of these words are more common in the bush than in the city. Before you commence reading, go through the following list with your students and explain each term. Students who are already familiar with a term could help explain it to the others.

First mention	Word	Meaning
page 6	caravan caravan park	
6	terrace	
7	jetty	
9	lever	
12	scraper	
15	annexe	
19	portable (stove)	
20	first aid kit	
21	to estimate	
25	barrier	
38	dinghy	
38	trailer	
38	to plead	
38	consent	
39	to scavenge	

## Structure and presentation

After reading the story, have students reexamine the cover illustration and answer the following:

- Which elements of the story are illustrated on the cover?
- Why do you think the cover illustrator, Sally Morgan, chose to paint those elements?
- Write an alternative back-cover blurb for the story.
- How important are the internal illustrations to your understanding of the story?
- Draw a scene from the book that is not already illustrated.
- How might the story have been different if it were told from the point of view of Dad, Mum, Malcolm or even the dog Patches? Choose one chapter and rewrite it from the perspective of one of the other characters.

## Checklists

On page 20 Annie's mum and dad run through a checklist of all the items they'll need when the cyclone arrives. Choose some of the

following situations and ask students to make an appropriate checklist, in pairs or groups.

- Organising a surprise birthday party for your friend
- Planning a camping trip
- Preparing for the first day of the school year
- Preparing for a flood, bushfire or another natural disaster that is relevant to your area
- Another situation of your choice

## Observing the environment

A Cyclone is Coming includes many descriptions of the weather, mostly by Annie (examples below). Like Pop and Dad, Annie observes her environment and comments on the way it looks, feels, sounds and smells. Such observation allows her to understand what is happening and make inferences and predictions. Start by exploring these as a class.

- The sea looks a bit rough and the wind is getting up. (p. 10 – Pop)
- In the sky I can see dark clouds gathering to block out the sun. It smells of rain. (p. 26)
- I hear the rain begin to fall lightly on the caravan. (p. 27)
- Outside the sky is darker and the rain is heavier. The wind has started to really blow. I can hear the annexe whipping backwards and forwards as the wind gusts push it in and out. The rain beats down hard on the caravan. Thud, thud, thud, thud, thud. (p. 28)
- While we eat, the wind and rain get heavier and louder outside. (pp. 32–33)
- all I can hear is ... silence. No wind, no rain; and it is sunny! (p. 34)
- Dad and I watch until the sky begins to darken, a light rain starts falling and the wind gusts get stronger again. Soon the wind is once again howling and the rain pounding down on the caravan. (p. 35)
- The first thing I notice when we walk outside is all the broken branches and leaves. They are everywhere. There is no wind or rain but the ground is very muddy. (pp. 36–37)

Arrange a class excursion to a park or natural bush area near your school. If this is not possible, arrange for your class to sit outdoors somewhere comfortable on the school grounds. Ask students to observe the weather and environment they are in, and write descriptions in their notebooks. Later share and discuss the notes in class. Remind children to use all of their senses:

- What can I see? (e.g. colour, shape, texture, light, movement and direction of the sky, clouds, trees, birds etc. Challenge children to give specific descriptions, for example noticing the shades of the colours they observe).
- What can I smell?
- What can I hear? (children may not notice any sounds at first, but will usually 'tune in' slowly to hear calls of birds, distant traffic etc. They could try to imitate the sounds, too.)
- What can I feel? (e.g. the sun's warmth, a light breeze/strong gusts against my back/face)
- 'What can I taste?' is not relevant in this exercise.

## Useful weather teaching resources

There are excellent teaching materials, for a range of age groups, freely available on the Bureau of Meteorology's website and ready to use in class. Visit: [http://www.bom.gov.au/lam/Students\\_Teachers/learnact.htm#cm](http://www.bom.gov.au/lam/Students_Teachers/learnact.htm#cm)

An excellent activity to accompany A Cyclone is Coming is the Bureau's 'Weather' lesson for Years 2–3. It includes a teacher's lesson plan and a student worksheet available as free, downloadable PDFs: [http://www.bom.gov.au/lam/Students\\_Teachers/lesson19.pdf](http://www.bom.gov.au/lam/Students_Teachers/lesson19.pdf)

## Performing in class

A Cyclone is Coming easily lends itself to a class performance. Depending on the size of your class, you could either assign a role for each student and create one class performance, or divide the class into groups and allocate each group a single chapter from the book to act out. Once they have had ample chance to practise, the class can perform to a friendly crowd of parents, or each group will perform their chapter to the rest of the class.

Be aware the children will need help from you with directing the performance. Shyer children may need extra help and gentle encouragement with this activity. To ensure all children are involved and included, students who wish to can be made in charge of sound effects, painting a backdrop for the performance, or sourcing props.

## Research and report writing

Researching cyclones is a useful way for children to develop their research and written presentation skills. Ask students to research the natural phenomenon of cyclones, individually or in groups, and submit their findings in the form of a 3–4 page written report. The report would answer such questions as:

- What are cyclones and how do they form?
- What is a cyclone's 'eye'?
- How often do cyclones occur?
- How is their severity measured and categorised?
- How are they named?
- What are some notable examples of cyclones in Australia's history?

If you have not previously taught report writing in class, you will need to dedicate adequate time to teaching the purpose and components of a report.

Especially useful for the research task is this cyclone fact sheet:

[http://www.ema.gov.au/www/ema/schools.nsf/Page/GetTheFacts\\_Cyclones\\_Cyclones](http://www.ema.gov.au/www/ema/schools.nsf/Page/GetTheFacts_Cyclones_Cyclones)

A complete lesson plan on cyclones is available on the Australian Government's Emergency Management website:

[http://www.ema.gov.au/www/ema/schools.nsf/Page/TeachLesson\\_PlansCyclones](http://www.ema.gov.au/www/ema/schools.nsf/Page/TeachLesson_PlansCyclones)

## Other Books in the Waarda Series

