



Teaching Notes – *The Lost Tail*

written by **Patricia Bernard**, illustrated by Tricia Oktober

About the Author

The author of picture books, skinny books, junior and adult novels, Patricia Bernard grew up in Melbourne and Rosebud, Victoria.

She left Australia when she was nineteen. During the next twenty years she sailed up the Nile, worked in Berlin during the closing of the Berlin wall, met Mohammed 5th of Morocco in the Sahara Desert, travelled in a sports car through Alaska in winter, fell in love with a Spanish matador, married in Jamaica, hitch-hiked with her one-year-old daughter around Japan and Korea just after the Korean War, became stranded on the Niagara Falls Bridge without a passport, visited Lhasa in Tibet, was among the first Australians to visit China in the seventies, and was the first NSW resident given a visa for Cuba.

She has worked and travelled in 114 countries: the USA, Scandinavia, Thailand, Belgium, Mexico, Guatemala, France, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Germany, Czech Republic, Easter Island, Vietnam and Laos, 1. She motor-biked alone around Cambodia within the sound of rebel gunfire, trekked across Reunion and Mauritius, backpacked around Madagascar, and drove around Mongolia. Next she is off to Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, and she intends seeing all the countries she hasn't yet seen.

Patricia lives in Queens Park in a convict-built house. She has three daughters, one son, five grandchildren who she puts in her books, and two fluffy silky terrier watchdogs. She loves travel, science fiction, children and cinema.

Patricia wrote *The Lost Tail* after a visit to Papua New Guinea. The young boy in the story, Nura, is a real person and many of the events in the story actually happened. After her third visit to Papua New Guinea when she went up the Epik River in a canoe, attended the Goroka Dance Festival and flew in a very small scary plane to Mount Hagen.

Teaching Notes

Australian Curriculum – English, Art (DRAFT)

NSW BOS HSIE

Teachers may choose from the following teaching notes the syllabus outcome(s) appropriate for their students, to assist them to develop interest and skills in inquiring into the aesthetic aspects of texts, and develop an informed appreciation of literature.

Teaching notes are supplied for the Australian Curriculum (1), which states that “students learn how ideas and viewpoints about events, issues and characters that are expressed by authors in texts are drawn from and shaped by different historical, social and cultural contexts.” Through “responding to literature, students learn to identify personal ideas, experiences and opinions about literary texts and discuss them with others. They learn how to recognise areas of agreement and difference, and how to develop and refine their interpretations through discussion and argument.”

Australian Curriculum – English

The Australian Curriculum: English aims to ensure that students:
develop interest and skills in inquiring into the aesthetic aspects of texts, and develop an informed appreciation of literature.

YEAR 1

Literary texts that support and extend Year 1 students as independent readers involve straightforward sequences of events and everyday happenings with recognisably realistic or imaginary characters. Informative texts present a small amount of new content about familiar topics of interest and topics being studied in other areas of the curriculum. These texts also present a small range of language features, including simple and compound sentences, some unfamiliar vocabulary, a small number of high frequency words and words that need to be decoded phonically, and sentence boundary punctuation, as well as illustrations and diagrams that support the printed text.

Literature		Elaborations	Suggested Activities
Literature & context	Discuss how authors create characters using language and images (ACELT1581)	identifying similarities between texts from different cultural traditions, for example [representations of dragons in traditional European and Asian texts, and] how spiritual beings are represented in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories (& PNG)	Patricia Bernard visits schools giving talks about her books to students. Students might compare the cultural traditions of the people of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
Responding to literature	Discuss characters and events in a range of literary texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students' own experiences (ACELT1582)	discussing characters from books [and films] and whether these are lifelike or imaginary (for example Nura)	Students might discuss Nura, his appearance, beliefs, mother, home, dance, food and the environment in which he lives.
Creating literature	Recreate texts imaginatively using drawing, writing, performance and digital forms of communication (ACELT1586)	creating visual representations of literary texts from Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or Asian cultures * writing character descriptions drawn from illustrations in stories	The Lost Tail is rich in word imagery. Students might use some of the descriptions in the story as stimulus to create their own short, illustrated text based on their own background or a culture of their own choice.
Literacy Texts in context	Respond to texts drawn from a range of cultures and experiences (ACELY1655)	exploring some of the meanings and teachings embedded in Dreaming stories	The internet has many websites (listed below) with stories of the Dreaming. Students might explore some of these for their meanings and teachings.
Interpreting, analysing and evaluating	Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning about key events, ideas and information in texts that they listen to, view and read by drawing on growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features (ACELY1660)	using elements in books and screen texts, for example illustrations, diagrams, sound and movement, to support reading * making connections between the text and students' own experiences, and between information in print and images	The Lost Tail is rich in visual imagery. Students might discuss these illustrations prior to listening to the story or reading the text.

YEAR 2

Literary texts that support and extend Year 2 students as independent readers involve sequences of events that span several pages and present unusual happenings within a framework of familiar experiences. Informative texts present new content about topics of interest and topics being studied in other areas of the curriculum.

Literature		Elaborations	Suggested Activities
Literature & context	Discuss how depictions of characters in print, sound and images reflect the contexts in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognising recurring characters, settings and themes in Dreaming stories experienced 	Students might: * investigate and list the characters in the teachings in

	which they were created (ACELT1587)	through texts, films and online sources • discussing moral and teaching stories from varied cultures, identifying and comparing their central messages	Aboriginal stories * compare these characters with those of the people of PNG * identify central messages in the stories of PNG and the Dreaming.
Literacy			
Interpreting, analysing and evaluating	Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning and begin to analyse texts by drawing on growing knowledge of context, language and visual features and print and multimodal text structures (ACELY1670)	making connections between information in print and images	Students might discuss how the text in <i>The Lost Tail</i> relates to the illustrations.
YEAR 3			
Students engage with a variety of texts for enjoyment. They listen to, read, view and interpret spoken, written and multimodal texts in which the primary purpose is to entertain, as well as texts designed to inform and persuade. These encompass traditional oral texts including picture books,			
Literature		Elaborations	Suggested Activities
Literature & context	Discuss texts in which characters, events and settings are portrayed in different ways, and speculate on the authors' reasons (ACELT1594)	reading texts in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children/young people are the central characters/protagonists and making links to students' own lives, noting similarities	The central character in <i>The Lost Tail</i> is a young boy called Nura. Students might compare Nura with a central character in a Dreamtime story such as <i>Mother's Helper</i> http://library.thinkquest.org/C0115620/beliefsstorymother1.html
Responding to Literature	Draw connections between personal experiences and the worlds of texts, and share responses with others (ACELT1596)	drawing on literature from Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or Asian cultures, to explore commonalities of experience and ideas as well as recognising difference in lifestyle and world view	Students might identify any commonalities of beliefs and/or experiences of Nura and a character in one of the Dreamtime stories.
YEAR 4			
Students engage with a variety of texts for enjoyment. They listen to, read, view and interpret spoken, written and multimodal texts in which the primary purpose is aesthetic, as well as texts designed to inform and persuade. These encompass traditional oral texts including Aboriginal stories, picture books,			
		Elaborations	Suggested Activities
Literature			
Examining Literature	Discuss how authors and illustrators make stories exciting, moving and absorbing and hold readers' interest by using various techniques, for example character development and plot tension (ACELT1605)	identifying pivotal points in the plot where characters are faced with choices and commenting on how the author makes us care about their decisions and consequences	Students might discuss at what stages in <i>The Lost Tail</i> is Nura faced with choices and what the result of his choices is, and whether the author makes us care about his decisions.
YEAR 5			
The range of literary texts for Foundation to Year 10 comprises Australian literature, including the oral narrative traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as the contemporary literature of these two cultural groups, and classic and contemporary world literature, including texts from and about Asia.			
Literature			
Literature and Context	Identify aspects of literary texts that convey details or information about particular social, cultural and	identifying variability within cultural contexts in literary texts, recognising the diversity of people's experiences	Students might work in teams to develop a list of cultural contexts in <i>The Lost Tail</i> . They might then compare these contexts with those of remote

	historical contexts (ACELT1608)	within a cultural group such as differences in setting and lifestyle between urban and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (and people of PNG)	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
Examining Literature	Recognise that ideas in literary texts can be conveyed from different viewpoints, which can lead to different kinds of interpretations and responses (ACELT1610)	examining the narrative voice in texts from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditions, which include perspectives of animals and spirits, about how we should care for the Earth, for example reflecting on how this affects significance, interpretation and response	Students might compare the rich culture of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with that of the people of the PNG highlands who have colourful local rituals that are called "sing sings". Research how both cultures paint themselves and dress up with feathers and animal skins to represent birds, trees or mountain spirits.

YEAR 6

The range of literary texts for Foundation to Year 10 comprises Australian literature, including the oral narrative traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as the contemporary literature of these two cultural groups, and classic and contemporary world literature, including texts from and about Asia.

Language			
Language variation and change	Understand that different social and geographical dialects or accents are used in Australia in addition to Standard Australian English (ACELA1515)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognising that there are more than 150 Aboriginal languages and two Torres Strait Islander languages and that they relate to geographic areas in Australia recognising that all languages and dialects are of equal value, although we use different ones in different contexts, for example the use of Standard Australian English, Aboriginal English and forms of Creole used by some Torres Strait Islander groups and some of Australia's near neighbours 	Students might: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> invite a speaker of one of the Aboriginal languages to their school to share their knowledge of that language Investigate pidgin English of PNG http://www.june29.com/HLP/lang/pidgin.html

The NSW Board of Studies Syllabus – Human Society and Its Environment is the key learning area in which students develop knowledge, understandings, skills, and values and attitudes about people and their social and physical environments.

Knowledge and understandings:

□ Cultures – By studying cultures, students should develop knowledge and understandings about cultures in Australia and other places, their diversity and similarities and how they influence people's identities and behaviours.

Values and Attitudes

Interest in, and informed and responsible attitudes towards, people, cultures, religions, societies, environments and learning, with a commitment to Intercultural understanding (2)

HSIE				
Outcomes	Early Stage 1/Stage 1 Indicators	Stage 2 Indicators	Stage 3 Indicators	Suggested Activities
Change and Continuity Time & Change CCS2.2 Explains changes in the community and family life and		<i>listens to life stories of Aboriginal people</i> <i>listens to life stories of people</i>		Students might compare family life of the traditional people from PNG with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people.

evaluates the effects of these on different individuals, groups and environments.		<i>from different cultural backgrounds</i>		
Cultures Identities CUS1.3 Identifies customs, practices, symbols, languages and traditions of their family and other families.	<i>identifies the events and activities that are practised by people in another country, eg PNG</i> <i>explains ways in which family members learn from each other about customs and traditions, eg through recounts, songs, dances, Dreaming stories</i>			People of the highlands engage in colourful local rituals that are called "sing sings". They paint themselves and dress up with feathers, pearls and animal skins to represent birds, trees or mountain spirits. Sometimes an important event is enacted at such a musical festival. Students might compare these rituals with Aboriginal practices.
Cultures Identities CUS2.3 Explains how shared customs, practices, symbols, languages and traditions in communities contribute to Australian and community identities.		<i>describes some similarities and differences between communities in Australia, Asia and other places in the world</i>		As Nura was leaving for the dance festival he "grabbed a handful of taro and sweet potato. How might this differ from a traditional breakfast in other countries. Students might discuss their traditional breakfast.
Cultures Cultural Diversity CUS1.4 Describes the cultural, linguistic and religious practices of their family, their community and other communities.	<i>communicates an understanding of how people in another country express their culture by mentioning some customs, practices, symbols and traditions</i>			The snake dance in <i>The Lost Tail</i> is a cultural practice. Students might discuss why they think this dance was performed. Students might theorise as to the beliefs behind the ghost dancers (page 11).
Environments Patterns of Place & Location ENS3.5 Demonstrates an understanding of the interconnectedness between Australia and global environments and how individuals and groups can act in an ecologically responsible manner.			<i>compares human use of an environmental area with use in another area of the world, eg cities of Sydney and Jakarta, rainforests of Queensland and Malaysia, urban and rural areas (PNG)</i>	Students might: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - discuss the topography of PNG compared with Australia - compare the wildlife of PNG with one other Pacific country.

Australian Curriculum – Art (DRAFT)

The Arts and Cross Curriculum Priorities

61. Some Arts subjects have direct relationships with other subjects. All the Arts are relevant to history and geography studies, because the Arts embody some of the most significant and recognisable products and records of all cultures. Drama and media arts have a strong focus on language, texts and narrative, and aspects of these two Arts subjects are taught as part of English.

69. All Arts are directly related to the cultural contexts of the participants – artists and audiences. Cultures express themselves and portray their images, in and across time and place, through their arts. The Arts are shaped by their culture and its history and traditions, and in turn help to shape and re-shape it.

72. The Arts incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as a priority for learning. Students will expand their knowledge and understandings of Identity, Country/Place, People and Culture through learning in each of the five Arts subjects. They will recognise the significance of the concept 'Living Communities' – the meanings it holds for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and for artists working through and within those Communities.

73. The oral histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are contained in and communicated through cultural expression in story, movement, song and visual traditions. The transmission of those histories and cultural expressions in a diversity of contemporary, mediated and culturally endorsed ways enables artists to affirm connection with Country/Place, People, Culture and Identity. (3)

The Australian Curriculum: The Arts aims to develop students':		
• insights into and understanding of local, regional and global cultures, histories and Arts traditions through engaging with the worlds of artists, art forms, practices and professions		
Foundation to Year 6 Visual Arts		Suggested Activities
2.9 Recognise that environments, societies, cultures and times are represented in a range of visual arts	represented in visual arts works from different social and cultural contexts, including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	Students might compare the Sepik River tradition of wood carving, representing ancestor spirits, with Aboriginal wood carving
4.9 Explore and explain visual arts works and comment on the connections with Australia, the Asia region and other world regions	exploring and explaining the social and cultural significance of art, craft and design works across time and place	<i>The Lost Tail</i> has illustrations of a wooden snake. Students might: * discuss in what way this representation of a snake is culturally significant. * compare Nura's snake with an Aboriginal artwork of an animal or bird.

The Lost Tail: Additional Activities

It is estimated that more than a thousand different cultural groups exist in Papua New Guinea. Because of this diversity, many different styles of cultural expression have emerged; each group has created its own expressive forms in art, dance, weaponry, costumes, singing, music, architecture and much more. Most of these different cultural groups have their own language. People typically live in villages that rely on subsistence farming. In some areas people hunt and collect wild plants, such as yam roots, to supplement their diets. Those who become skilled at hunting, farming and fishing earn a great deal of respect.

What was Nura's hut made from?

What is "a handful of taro and sweet potato" that Nura ate for breakfast? How is taro grown and how is it cooked? Have you eaten these foods?

What is sweet potato and where did it originate. How does it contribute to the diet of the people from PNG? How is it prepared for eating?

Compare the traditional breakfast foods of China, PNG, Australia and other countries that students suggest.

Nura is referred to as a Bundi boy. What does this mean? (Usino Bundi District is a district in the south of Madang Province in Papua New Guinea)

Looking at the picture of the snake for the boys' snake dance, why do you think this dance was performed?

Nura's mother told him that Bundi warriors are never afraid. Why would she say this?

What did Nura's mother mean when she said, "Do not become lost in the night mists, Nura"?

What is the significance of the feathered headdresses (page 8)? What is the source of the feathers?

Why did Nura want to win the dance contest? What was the money for?

Papua New Guinea Resources

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pp.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papua_new_guinea

<http://www.papuanewguinea.travel/imagegallery>

<http://www.june29.com/HLP/lang/pidgin.html>

Australian Aboriginal Resources

Dance: <http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/austn-indigenous-ceremony>

Dance: <http://www.bangarra.com.au/performance>

Ceremonies: <http://www.ozoutback.com.au/Australia/abcerna/index.html>

Rainbow Snake Story: <http://www.kullillaart.com.au/default.asp?PageID=71>

The Rainbow Serpent: http://www.janesoceania.com/australia_aboriginal_dreamtime/index1.htm

Mother's Helper: <http://library.thinkquest.org/C0115620/beliefsstorymother1.html>

Australian Teaching Resources

<http://teachers.ash.org.au/jmresources/dreaming/stories.html>

<http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/shared/thedreaming.htm>

The Lost Tail ISBN: 9781921665868 - available from **Ford Street Publishing**

Ford Street books are available from all good bookshops or direct from the publisher, post free: www.fordstreetpublishing.com

Other books by Patricia Bernard

Challenge of the Trumpalar

Riddle of the Trumpalar

We Are Tam

My Australian Story: Claw of the Dragon (2008)

My Australian Story: Snatched by Pirates (2012)

References

(1) Australian Curriculum – English, History, Maths and Science (Monday, 23 January 2012)

(2) NSW Board of Studies Human Society and its Environment (HSIE) Syllabus

(3) © Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2011