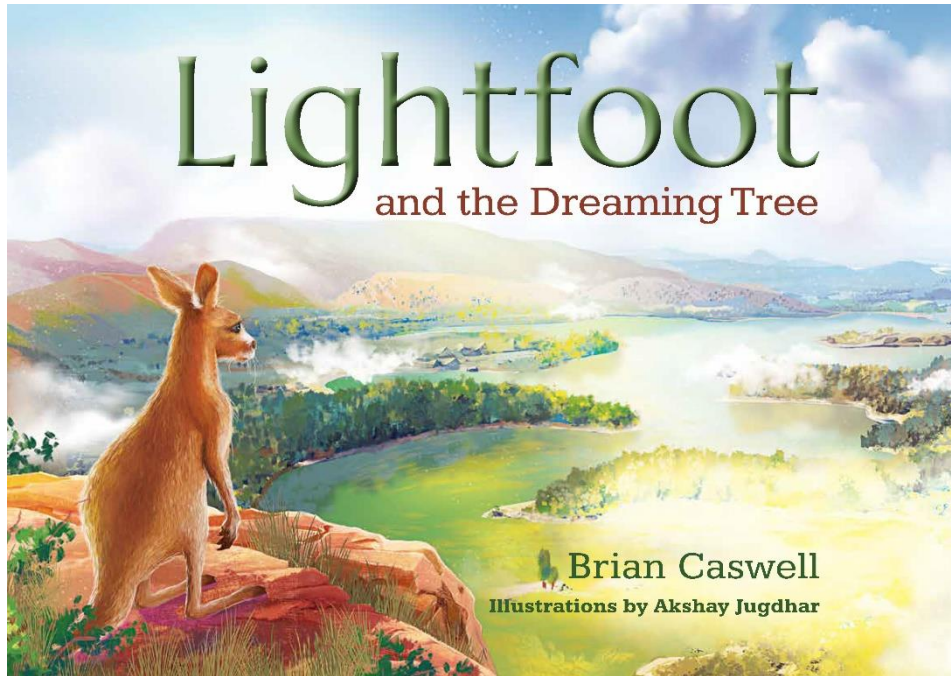


Teaching Resources



Lightfoot and the Dreaming Tree

By Brian Caswell

Illustrated by Akshay Jugdhar

SYNOPSIS

The Dreaming Tree is a legend known to every creature in the Bush. Its powerful magic has resisted fires and storms since the time before Time, but if you seek its protection in your moment of need, there is a price to pay. For to escape its endless Dream requires special courage and an open heart.

Few creatures are brave enough to complete the Tree's quest, but Lightfoot is not just any bush creature.

Join her on her adventure, as she travels night and day through the beautiful and challenging environments of the Australian Bush, to complete her quest – and learn what it means to be truly brave.

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Teacher Guide

(For discussion questions, SEL focus, and classroom use)

Before Reading

- What does it mean to be brave?
 - Can you be brave and still feel scared?
 - What do you know about kangaroos and the Australian bush?
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During Reading – Guided Discussion

- How does Lightfoot feel when she is alone?
 - What mistakes does Lightfoot make at first?
 - How do the Raven, Snake, and Fish help her?
 - Why is listening important in this story?
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After Reading – Reflection

- How did Lightfoot change by the end of the story?
 - What did she learn about herself?
 - When have you felt scared but kept going anyway?
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SEL-Focused Activities

- **Emotion Mapping:** Identify moments of fear, courage, pride, and calm
 - **Role Play:** Act out meeting the animals and asking for help
 - **Growth Mindset Talk:** Discuss how mistakes help us learn
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Literacy Extensions

- Retell the journey using pictures or story cards
 - Create a class refrain about courage
 - Draw a map of Lightfoot's journey and label key events
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Cross-Curricular Links

- **Science / Environment:** Australian animals and bushfire awareness
- **Creative Arts:** Painting bush landscapes or Dreaming Trees
- **Movement:** Kangaroo hopping and journey pathways

Below is a points list explicitly aligned to Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), Social–Emotional Learning (SEL), and early literacy outcomes.

Curriculum & Early Learning Aligned

EYLF Alignment

- **EYLF Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity**
Lightfoot’s journey supports identity formation as she learns who she is beyond size or age—developing confidence, independence, and a positive self-concept.
 - **EYLF Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world**
The story models respect for others, listening to different perspectives, and learning from those who are different—reinforcing empathy, cooperation, and community.
 - **EYLF Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing**
Through fear, uncertainty, and perseverance, Lightfoot demonstrates emotional regulation, resilience, and courage in the face of adversity.
 - **EYLF Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners**
The quest structure encourages curiosity, problem-solving, persistence, and adaptability, showing that learning often involves trying new strategies and learning from mistakes.
 - **EYLF Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators**
The rhythmic verse, dialogue, and repetition support oral language development, listening comprehension, and expressive storytelling.
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Social–Emotional Learning (SEL) Outcomes

- **Self-awareness**
Lightfoot recognises her fears, strengths, pride, and doubts, helping children identify and name their own emotions.
- **Self-management**
The narrative models managing fear, persisting through challenges, and making thoughtful choices under pressure.
- **Social awareness**
Encounters with the Raven, Snake, and Fish encourage perspective-taking and respect for others’ knowledge and experience.

- **Responsible decision-making**

Lightfoot learns that courage includes listening, adapting, and sometimes doing things differently than before.

Literacy & Language Development

- **Rich, rhythmic language ideal for read-alouds**

The lyrical verse supports phonological awareness, rhythm, rhyme, and memory.

- **Repetition and refrains**

Repeated journey lines reinforce narrative structure and support prediction, recall, and early comprehension skills.

- **Narrative sequencing and story arc**

Clear beginning, middle, climax, and resolution help children understand story structure and cause-and-effect.

- **Vocabulary development**

Exposure to descriptive language connected to nature, emotion, and action enhances expressive and receptive vocabulary.

Cross-Curricular & Classroom Use

- **Supports discussion-based learning**

Ideal for guided conversations about bravery, fear, bushfire safety, independence, and returning home changed.

- **Environmental and place-based learning**

Celebrates the Australian landscape and wildlife, supporting early environmental awareness and connection to place.

- **Creative extension opportunities**

Suitable for drama, art, movement, music, and creative writing activities linked to the quest and characters.

Why Educators Choose This Book

- Authentically Australian while addressing universal childhood experiences
- Strong emotional literacy without didactic teaching
- Perfect balance of adventure, reassurance, and meaning
- Ideal for ages 4–8, classrooms, libraries, and family reading

Information For Curriculum Alignment & Planning Documents

EYLF Learning Goals & Assessment Language

EYLF Outcome 1 – Identity

Learning Focus:

Children develop a strong sense of self, confidence, and belief in their own abilities.

Evidence in Text:

Lightfoot begins as brave but over-confident and gradually learns to balance courage with humility, self-awareness, and perseverance.

Observable Learning Indicators:

- Children express confidence in attempting new tasks
 - Children talk about their own strengths and challenges
 - Children show pride in persistence and effort rather than outcome
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EYLF Outcome 2 – Connection to Community and Others

Learning Focus:

Children learn to respect others, value diverse perspectives, and understand interdependence.

Evidence in Text:

Lightfoot's interactions with the Raven, Snake, and Fish reinforce listening, respect for others' knowledge, and learning from difference.

Observable Learning Indicators:

- Children listen to others' ideas
 - Children demonstrate empathy and cooperation
 - Children recognise that others may have different strengths
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EYLF Outcome 3 – Wellbeing

Learning Focus:

Children develop resilience, emotional regulation, and strategies for coping with fear or uncertainty.

Evidence in Text:

Lightfoot faces fear, isolation, danger, and doubt—yet learns to persist, self-soothe, and draw on inner strength.

Observable Learning Indicators:

- Children identify emotions such as fear, courage, and pride
 - Children practise calming strategies
 - Children show resilience after setbacks
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EYLF Outcome 4 – Confident and Involved Learners**Learning Focus:**

Children develop curiosity, persistence, problem-solving skills, and a growth mindset.

Evidence in Text:

Each challenge in the quest requires adaptation, reflection, and trying new approaches.

Observable Learning Indicators:

- Children attempt unfamiliar tasks
 - Children adjust strategies when faced with difficulty
 - Children show persistence and curiosity
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EYLF Outcome 5 – Effective Communicators**Learning Focus:**

Children engage with language through listening, speaking, and storytelling.

Evidence in Text:

Rhythmic verse, repetition, and dialogue support oral language, narrative understanding, and expressive communication.

Observable Learning Indicators:

- Children retell parts of the story
 - Children join in repeated refrains
 - Children use new vocabulary and descriptive language
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Early Learning Centre: Parent Guide

(For display, parent handouts, enrolment packs, or digital portals)

Learning Together with *Lightfoot and the Dreaming Tree*

At our early learning centre, we use stories to help children build **confidence, emotional understanding, and language skills.**

Lightfoot and the Dreaming Tree supports this learning in a gentle, age-appropriate way.

Why We Chose This Book

This story helps children learn that:

- It's okay to feel scared sometimes
- Courage means trying, even when things are hard
- Listening and learning from others helps us grow
- Strength comes from inside us

These ideas support children's **social–emotional development**, wellbeing, and early literacy.

How This Story Supports Your Child's Learning

Building Confidence

Lightfoot is brave—but she also makes mistakes. Children learn that confidence grows through effort, not perfection.

Understanding Feelings

The story includes fear, pride, determination, and relief. These moments help children recognise and talk about their own emotions.

Learning from Others

Lightfoot meets characters who help her in different ways. This encourages empathy, listening, and respect.

Language and Literacy

The rhythmic language and repeated lines support:

- Listening and attention
 - Vocabulary development
 - Memory and storytelling skills
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How You Can Support Learning at Home

You don't need to "teach" the story—just enjoy it together.

Try asking:

- *How do you think Lightfoot feels here?*
- *What helped her keep going?*
- *Have you ever felt scared but tried anyway?*

Talking together builds understanding and confidence.

A Shared Message for Children

Being brave doesn't mean you're never scared.

It means you keep going, listen, and believe in yourself.

School–HomeConnection Sheet

(For take-home reading packs, Foundation–Year 2)

School–Home Reading Connection

Book Title: *Lightfoot and the Dreaming Tree*

Author: Brian Caswell

Age Range: Foundation – Year 2

What We Are Learning at School

In class, we are using this story to explore:

- Courage and resilience
 - Understanding feelings
 - Listening and learning from others
 - Story structure and retelling
-

Talk About the Story at Home

After reading together, you might ask:

- What was the hardest part of Lightfoot’s journey?
- Who helped Lightfoot along the way?
- Was Lightfoot brave even when she felt scared?
- What did she learn about herself?

There are no right or wrong answers—conversation is the goal.

Try This Simple Activity

My Courage Moment

Ask your child to draw or tell you about:

- A time they tried something new



- A time they felt nervous but kept going

You can write their words underneath their drawing.

Literacy Link

Encourage your child to:

- Retell the story in their own words
- Join in with repeated lines
- Talk about the beginning, middle, and end

This supports reading comprehension and confidence.

A Message for Families

Stories help children understand themselves and the world.

Sharing books together—even for a few minutes—makes a big difference.

Thank you for supporting your child’s learning at home.

State Education Department–Aligned Curriculum Rationale

(Submission-ready language for inclusion lists grants, literacy programs,
and procurement panels)

Title: *Lightfoot and the Dreaming Tree*

Author: Brian Caswell

Illustrator: Akshay Jugdhar

Target Age Range: Foundation – Year 2 (approx. 4–8 years)

Curriculum Relevance and Educational Value

Lightfoot and the Dreaming Tree is a high-quality Australian picture book that supports early childhood and lower-primary learning across **personal and social capability, literacy, and wellbeing**, with strong alignment to the **Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)** and complementary relevance to state curriculum priorities in resilience, emotional literacy, and narrative comprehension.

The text combines a clear narrative arc with rhythmic language and visual storytelling to support both cognitive and social–emotional development. Set within an Australian landscape and featuring native fauna, the book provides authentic local context while addressing universal developmental themes.

Alignment to EYLF Outcomes

Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity

The protagonist’s journey supports the development of self-concept, independence, and confidence. Lightfoot learns to balance courage with reflection, reinforcing positive identity formation and self-belief.

Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

Through respectful interactions with other characters, the text models empathy, listening, and valuing diverse perspectives—key components of social capability and ethical understanding.

Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

The narrative addresses fear, uncertainty, and perseverance in a developmentally appropriate way, supporting emotional regulation, resilience, and coping strategies.

Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners

The quest structure encourages curiosity, problem-solving, persistence, and adaptability. Children observe learning as an active process involving mistakes, reflection, and growth.

Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators

The lyrical verse, repetition, and dialogue enhance oral language development, phonological awareness, listening comprehension, and narrative sequencing.

Literacy and Pedagogical Strengths

- Supports **explicit and implicit comprehension strategies**
 - Reinforces **story structure, cause-and-effect, and sequencing**
 - Suitable for **guided reading, shared reading, and whole-class discussion**
 - Encourages oral retelling, prediction, and reflective discussion
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Broader Educational Priorities

- **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL):** self-awareness, self-management, social awareness
 - **Australian context:** native animals, bushland, and environmental themes
 - **Wellbeing and resilience education:** courage, persistence, emotional growth
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Conclusion

Lightfoot and the Dreaming Tree is a curriculum-relevant, age-appropriate literary text that supports early learning priorities across literacy, wellbeing, and personal development. It is suitable for inclusion in state-supported reading programs, school libraries, and early childhood education settings.