



### ***SPIRIT OF THE CROCODILE***

Written by AARON FA'AOSO and MICHELLE SCOTT TUCKER  
with LYN WHITE

**RECOMMENDED FOR: Ages 11–14 YEARS OLD (YEARS 5 & 6 PRIMARY, YEARS 7 & 8 SECONDARY)**

**GENRE:** Indigenous Fiction, Middle Fiction, Disaster Resilience, Climate Fiction

**THEMES:** Growing up in the Torres Strait, First Nations' Culture and identity, family and community, resilience, courage, friendship, climate disaster in the Pacific Islands

#### **CURRICULUM LEARNING AREAS:**

- English: Literature and language
- Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS): Geography, Science
- Visual Arts
- Framework for Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages
- Cross-curriculum priorities: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, Sustainability

**NOTES WRITTEN BY:** Sarah Mokrzycki

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## INTRODUCTION

Ezra is an ordinary kid who lives in an extraordinary place: Saibai Island in the Torres Strait. Everyone on Saibai is like family – so much so that Ezra calls all the older people aunty and uncle, or athe and aka (grandfather and grandmother). One day, a crocodile looks straight at Ezra. As a member of the Koedal (crocodile) clan, Ezra can't help but think it means something. Later, his mum says the crocodile is a symbol of change. But what kind of change? The personal kind, like Ezra starting high school on a different island? Or the global kind, like the climate disaster altering the weather and tides of Saibai? Ezra doesn't want his life to change: he struggles to do the right thing and realises that not thinking before he acts can have dangerous consequences. When an unexpected storm threatens the island, Ezra learns the importance of taking responsibility, and the power of his connection to his family, culture and community.

## PLOT SUMMARY

Ezra is a twelve-year-old boy who lives with his family on Saibai Island in the Torres Strait. He is small for his age and anxious about starting high school, because it means leaving Saibai to live on Thursday Island. Early in the novel, Ezra's encounter with the crocodile unsettles him as its direct stare seems to look straight through him. Later, Ezra and his best mate Mason attend an Ubu Poethay, or beard-shaving ceremony, for two older boys. Although Mason and Ezra have great fun with a dare, the ceremony makes Ezra worry about how much things are going to change.

Ms Blake and her son Billy, a bully and one of the few white kids on the island, attend lunch with Ezra and Mason's families. They discuss the previous night's ceremony, which Ms Blake openly criticises. Ezra also finds out that his mum, Zipporah, a student teacher, has a placement on the mainland next year.

The boys and their families attend high school orientation on Thursday Island. Ezra learns that his big sister, Maryanne, has applied for a scholarship to the school Zipporah will be teaching at. On Orientation Day, in a bid to fulfil another dare and impress Mason, Ezra slides under an idling truck. The truck moves off and Ezra, lucky to be unharmed, is left feeling ashamed and embarrassed. Ezra's dad, Guy, who works for the Department of Fisheries, picks up a new boat from work. The boat isn't suitable for navigating the waters of the Strait, but his boss doesn't listen.

Guy takes Ezra out fishing and afterwards tells him to give three of the fish they caught to an elder. Ezra contemplates skimping on the gift because he wants to show off his catch to his siblings but realises this would be disrespectful and does the right thing. Later, Ezra unthinkingly points a speargun at his younger brother and Guy yells at him. Ezra feels ashamed again.

A sudden storm hits the island, and Ezra and Mason are sent to Mason's house to look after Mason's grandfather. Mason's dad Jenson goes out to look for Guy, who is stuck in the

storm in the new boat. The storm quickly turns into a flood, and Ezra braves the weather and water to seek help from the Blakes. He is surprised to find that Ms Blake is capable and helpful, while Billy is scared of the storm. With great difficulty, they manage to get Mason's grandfather to the Blakes' house and to safety.

In the aftermath Ezra waits for news of his father, and discovers the irreversible impacts of the storm. He helps his mum and encourages Maryanne with her scholarship, realising that it feels good to do the right thing. Guy and Jenson make it back unharmed, and everyone celebrates.

Spirit of the Crocodile is an excellent text for exploring contemporary life, family, community and culture in the Torres Strait. This realistic fiction novel can be studied as a class text or used as a tuning-in resource for units of work across several learning areas. It is an engaging narrative for literature circles, guided reading and read-aloud sessions in literacy programs.

## BEFORE READING

### Learning about the Torres Strait region

Ask the class what they know about the Torres Strait. Consider questions like:

- Where are the Torres Strait islands?
- What country is this region a part of?
- How many islands do you think make up the Torres Strait Islands?
- What do you already know about the Torres Strait?

Separate students into small groups and direct them to the following online resources:

- [‘About the Torres Strait’](#) on the [Torres Shire Council](#) website
- [‘Culture, protocols and heritage’](#), [‘Our geography’](#) and [‘Torres Strait history’](#) on the [Torres Strait Island Regional Council](#) website

Ask each group to read through the resources and note down the following:

- One fact about the location or geography
- One fact about the culture, spirituality or traditions
- At least three different languages spoken
- Their favourite interesting fact
- One new thing they have learned

Afterwards, discuss and compare the facts as a class. Did any groups come up with the same responses? If so, encourage discussion about why this might be. How many different facts did the class come up with altogether? If possible, note down all the responses on the board for the class to view.

### Extension: Think-Pair-Share

As a class, view '[Culture in the Torres Strait Islands in Australia](#)' on YouTube. Encourage students to make individual notes while viewing. Afterwards, pose the following questions:

- What is meant by the term 'culture', and why is it important?
- In what ways can culture be shared or taught?
- What happens if knowledge isn't passed down?
- Invite students to share aspects of their own culture

Have students work on responses individually, then share their thoughts with a partner. Afterwards, ask pairs to share their thoughts with the class.

Note: Encourage discussion and debate but remind students that while they do not need to agree with each other, they should respect each others' opinions.

You can link the above activities to Cross-curriculum priorities: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures content descriptions and elaborations.

### Climate disaster

Create a class mind-map on the whiteboard with 'Climate disaster' in the middle. Ask students to call out words or phrases they associate with climate disaster and add them to the board. You can scaffold the discussion by adding terms like *global warming*, *rising sea levels*, *temperature*, *weather patterns*, *drought*, *storms*, etc. Review the mind-map together as a class.

Further information on climate disaster and climate emergency can be found in the Online Resources section at the end of these notes.

### On the cover

As a class, examine the front cover of the book and ask students to discuss what they think the book will be about and where the story is set. Encourage students to interpret the visual cues: e.g., How effective is the crocodile/mountain image in drawing the readers' attention? What significance does the pattern used in the title font and fish images hold? What do the flora and fauna (palm trees and birds) tell us about the location of the story? Encourage students to think about and explain their reasoning. Afterwards, pose the following to the class:

What do we **know** from the information available? What **predictions** can we make about the book based on this information?

## Q&A WITH Aaron Fa'Aoso and Michelle Scott Tucker

### What do you see as the major themes/essence of this book?

- Love, and the many ways of expressing it
- Different ways of seeing: acknowledging that there are other ways to view the world
- Responsibility: what does it mean to grow up, and take responsibility for our actions?
- Belonging to place, community and culture
- The climate emergency that faces the Pacific Islands

'Early on in the process we consciously made a creative decision to be a little subversive – to tell a slightly different First Nations story. Readers will find no trauma focus here. Our Torres Strait Islander characters belong to loving families, where parents work in good jobs and value education. Our characters are part of a generous and well-functioning community that gently guides them towards accepting their responsibilities. Despite what the (white) media all too often tells us, loving, heartwarming and laugh-out-loud stories are also an authentic reflection of the reality of life in a remote community.'

'We hope our readers learn something about the Torres Strait and its people. But another of our chief motivations in writing this book was to demonstrate to mainland Australian readers that – in all the ways that are important – Torres Strait Islander kids are just like them. Ezra and Mason love basketball, video games and the sea. Ezra finds his little brothers deeply annoying and will do almost anything for a dare – especially if there's cake involved! The boys get told off for farting; they worry about getting teased; and they wonder what they might become when they grow up. Ezra's biggest problem (he thinks) is that he doesn't want to go to high school next year, because it means leaving Saibai to live on a different island, many hours away from home. They really are just ordinary Australian kids who happen to live in an extraordinary location.'

'Our hope is that *Spirit of the Crocodile* shines a light on a little-known corner of Australia, and introduces readers – through the eyes of their new friends Ezra, Mason, Maryanne and Barbara – to new ways of looking at their own world.'

## CLASSROOM DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES

### ENGLISH

### LITERATURE

### LEARNING THROUGH LANGUAGE

*Year 5: Identify aspects of literary texts that convey details or information about particular social, cultural and historical contexts (ACELT1608)*

*Year 6: Make connections between students' own experiences and those of characters and events represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1613)*

*Year 7: Identify and explore ideas and viewpoints about events, issues and characters represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1619)*

*Year 8: Explore the interconnectedness of Country/Place, People, Identity and Culture in texts including those by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors (ACELT1806)*

Ask students to consider what new information they have learned about culture, spirituality, tradition and community through the language used in the book. Separate students into small groups and direct them to the Torres Strait Vocabulary worksheet II at the end of these notes.

Assign each group one of the topics (Titles and names, Food and cooking, etc.) and have them revisit the corresponding pages. Ask groups to create a slideshow using PowerPoint, Google Slides, or similar programs that answers the following questions:

- What do these words mean?
- What is their significance to culture, spirituality and/or tradition?
- How do these words show a sense of community or togetherness?
- What do we learn about the Torres Strait islands through this language?

How do these words highlight the interconnectedness between Country, people, identity and culture? For example: Are foods, clothing and titles specific to a region or clan? What role does culture, tradition and spirituality play in the lives of people in the story?

Have each group present their slideshow to the class, then lead students in a discussion about their own connection to the information presented. Prompts could include:

- Do you participate in group or community activities outside of school?
- Do you look for constellations in the stars? If so, what do you see?
- Do you call any friends or family by special names?

## PERSPECTIVE & CHARACTERISATION

*5: Recognise that ideas in literary texts can be conveyed from different viewpoints, which can lead to different kinds of interpretations and responses (ACELT1610)*

*Year 6: Identify and explain how choices in language, for example modality, emphasis, repetition and metaphor, influence personal response to different texts (ACELT1615)*

*Year 7: Reflect on ideas and opinions about characters, settings and events in literary texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others and justifying a point of view (ACELT1620)*

*Year 8: Explore the ways that ideas and viewpoints in literary texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts may reflect or challenge the values of individuals and groups (ACELT1626)*

Ask students to reread pp. 56–58 and consider:

- When the beard-shaving ceremony is presented from Ms Blake's point of view, how does it sound?
- What is the significance of Zipporah's line, 'I guess it depends on what you choose to see'?
- Why does Ms Blake think Captain Cook 'discovered' Australia? And why would she be 'unhappy about being contradicted' on this?

Next, ask students to reread pp. 197–209 and consider:

- Is it a surprise to readers, like it is to Ezra, that Ms Blake is calm and helpful in a crisis? Does our perception of her change in this part of the novel?
- Zipporah and Ms Blake are initially shown as complete opposites as mothers. Are there actually similarities between them?
- What connections exist between the ceremonial aspect Ms Blake earlier criticised ('women getting walked over') and Ate Harold sitting on the boys' arms and using them as a seat to get up the stairs? What is the significance of this?

Finally, ask students to reread p. 222 and consider:

- Why does Ezra repeat Zipporah's earlier words back to her?
- Do you agree with Zipporah or with Ezra about the Blakes?

Reiterate to students that characters, like real people, aren't completely good or completely bad but they can have both good and bad traits. Ask students to think critically about Ms Blake as a character and have them participate in a 'Where do you stand?' game or class debate on the following question:

*Do Ms Blake's later actions make up for her earlier prejudice and 'whitewashing' of Australian history?*

Note: students may benefit from the [Merriam-Webster dictionary definition](#) of whitewashing:

*'To portray (the past) in a way that increases the prominence, relevance, or impact of white people and minimizes or misrepresents that of nonwhite people.'*

## CREATIVE WRITING: LITERARY DEVICES

*Year 5: Understand, interpret and experiment with sound devices and imagery, including simile, metaphor and personification, in narratives, shape poetry, songs, anthems and odes (ACELT1611)*

*Year 6: Experiment with text structures and language features and their effects in creating literary texts, for example, using imagery, sentence variation, metaphor and word choice (ACELT1800)*

*Year 7: Experiment with text structures and language features and their effects in creating literary texts, for example, using rhythm, sound effects, monologue, layout, navigation and colour (ACELT1805)*

*Year 8: Identify and evaluate devices that create tone, for example humour, wordplay, innuendo and parody in poetry, humorous prose, drama or visual texts (ACELT1630)*

Ask students to revisit the following literary devices used in the book:

- Idioms, expressions and slang:
  - Mouthing off p. 11
  - Torn strips off p. 13
  - Piece of her mind p. 15
  - Out like a light p. 23
  - She's deadly p. 85
- Figurative language and imagery:
  - Bucketed down p. 3
  - Sweet tang of overripe mangoes p. 3
  - Sheepishly p. 13
  - Crumpled with age p. 17

Discuss as a class how these words/phrases make for a better reading experience. Afterwards, invite students to create a short piece of creative writing using some of the language features above as a guide. Encourage students to also consider devices like metaphor, simile, hyperbole, etc. Teachers can direct students to [writers.com](#) for an extensive list of literary devices.



Younger Students: Find examples in the text of how authors use similes and metaphors to create vivid images of setting, characters and certain scenes.

### Older Students: Extension: Jampacked writing

Challenge students further by having them write a short paragraph with as many idioms or expressions as possible. For example:

*Maybe acting in this play would be a **blessing in disguise**, thought Amy. It was **better late than never** to get into a new hobby, so maybe it was time to **bite the bullet**! I mean, it's **not rocket science**, she thought, and **no pain, no gain**, right? Maybe she was **off her rocker**, but she was ready to **throw caution to the wind** – she was **fit as a fiddle**, after all, and **fortune favours the bold**!*

Direct students to [English Idioms](#) for an extensive list, and encourage them to get as hyperbolic and descriptive as possible!

## LANGUAGE

*Year 5: Understand how to use knowledge of known words, base words, prefixes and suffixes, word origins, letter patterns and spelling generalisations to spell new words (ACELA1513)*

*Year 6: Understand how to use knowledge of known words, word origins including some Latin and Greek roots, base words, prefixes, suffixes, letter patterns and spelling generalisations to spell new words including technical words (ACELA1526)*

*Year 6: Understand how to use phonic knowledge and accumulated understandings about blending, letter-sound relationships, common and uncommon letter patterns and phonic generalisations to read and write increasingly complex words (ACELA1830)*

*Year 7: Understand how to use spelling rules and word origins, for example Greek and Latin roots, base words, suffixes, prefixes, spelling patterns and generalisations to learn new words and how to spell them (ACELA1539)*

*Year 8: Understand how to apply learned knowledge consistently in order to charlie spell accurately and to learn new words including nominalisations (ACELA1549)*

## VOCABULARY EXERCISE

Ask students to choose one word from the list below (or the teacher can assign), and complete Vocabulary worksheet I at the end of these notes. If time permits, students could complete worksheets for multiple words.

Note: to read these words in context, visit the corresponding page numbers to see how they are used in a sentence.

Withering p. 6	Imperiously p. 82	Alleviate p. 131
Placenta p. 7	Equably p. 85	Disgruntled p. 146
Companionably p. 10	Unfurling p. 89	Copious p. 162
Embellishment p. 22	Crescendo p. 100	Meagre p. 171
Tantalisingly p. 26	Incredulous p. 103	Illuminated p. 173
Alibi p. 34	Traversed p. 116	Palpable p. 209
Crocheted p. 41	Genuinely p. 123	Exaggerated p. 210
Confer p. 43	Ruefully p. 124	Imperious p. 216

### Extension: Complex vocabulary

Zephyred p. 3	Nauseating p. 117	Rebuke p. 172
Desultory p. 97	Surreptitiously p. 118	Exasperation p. 185
Rigmarole p. 104	Syncopated p. 125	Laboriously p. 201
Manoeuvring p. 111	Unperturbed p. 135	Uncharacteristically p. 209
Turquoise p. 112	Enunciating p. 153	Dubious p. 193
Ostentatiously p. 115	Magnanimous p. 154	Nonchalance p. 210

### ADDITIONAL LEARNING AREAS: GEOGRAPHY

#### GEOGRAPHY:

*Year 5: The environmental and human influences on the location and characteristics of a place and the management of spaces within them (ACHASSK113)*

*Year 5: The influence of people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, on the environmental characteristics of Australian places (ACHASSK112)*

*Year 6: Examine different viewpoints on actions, events, issues and phenomena in the past and present (ACHASS1127)*

*Year 7: The way that flows of water connects places as it moves through the environment and the way this affects places (ACHGK038)*

*Year 7: Economic, cultural, spiritual and aesthetic value of water for people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and peoples of the Asia region (ACHGK041)*

#### SCIENCE:

*Year 6: Sudden geological changes and extreme weather events can affect Earth's surface (ACSSU096)*

*Year 7: Some of Earth's resources are renewable, including water that cycles through the environment, but others are non-renewable (ACSSU116)*

*Year 8: Scientific knowledge has changed peoples' understanding of the world and is refined as new evidence becomes available (ACSHE134) Exploring & Responding (Years 5 & 6: AC9AV6E01; Years 7 & 8: AC9AV8E01); Creating & Making (Years 5 & 6: AC9AV6C01; Years 7&8: AC9AV8C01, AC9AV8C02)*

## **CLIMATE DISASTER & THE TORRES STRAIT**

Revisit sections of the book that examine climate disaster:

- p. 65: Rising sea levels mean fewer people can grow their own food
- pp. 72–73: Conversation about climate disaster between characters, and who is responsible
- p. 91: Maryanne's essay about seasonal changes to fruiting and harvesting times caused by global warming
- p. 119: Flora affected by salt water/rising sea levels
- p. 135: Weather changes/frequency of storms
- pp. 168–9: Fish numbers in coastal waters are falling
- p. 212: Rex notes that he's never seen a king tide this side of Christmas, but global warming has changed everything
- p. 224: Inactivity of the government and how no one in charge does a 'damn thing' to stop it
- p. 226: Maryanne discusses her need to get through to the 'whitefella world'
- p. 234: Maryanne argues 'surprise' weather events are no longer surprises
- p. 239: Discussion on marine pollution from cargo ships, discarded objects, rubbish, etc.
- pp. 245–246 Authors' note

Put students in small groups or pairs to make notes regarding the following prompts:

- What new information have I learned about climate disaster/emergency?
- What do I want to learn more about? What do I want more information on?
- Why and how are things like plants and food affected by temperature and rising sea levels?
- Why, if the water is rising, is the fish population declining?
- What recent initiatives have Torres Strait Islanders taken to protect their homeland from climate disaster? Reference here the High Court challenge by a group of Torres Strait elders

- What did the uncles do in the High Court? For more information:
  - [Behind the News](#): Torres Strait Climate Disaster Court Case
  - [Now This Earth](#): Torres Strait Islanders Win Climate Inaction Case Against Australian Govt
- <https://www.clientearth.org/latest/press-office/press-releases/torres-strait-islanders-win-historic-human-rights-legal-fight-against-australia/>

Add in the fact that young Islanders are being proactive:

<https://www.spc.int/updates/blog/dynamic-story/2024/12/why-pacific-youth-are-taking-their-fight-against-climate-change>

Challenge students with questions like:

What could Ezra and Mason do to help protect their homeland from the threat of further erosion of their lifestyle?

Direct students to what Maryanne says to Ezra on p. 226:

*'It might give me an easier way through to the whitefella world ... So I can learn how to use their stuff to help our people. Like Eddie Mabo did. Like the uncles are trying to do in the High Court. I want to learn how to use their rules, their laws, their knowledge.'*

Have students research the following and share their findings with the class:

- Who is Eddie Mabo and what did he do? For more information:
  - [Indigenous.gov.au](https://www.indigenous.gov.au): What is Mabo Day?

## **ADDITIONAL LEARNING AREAS: VISUAL ART**

*Years 5 & 6: Explore ideas and practices used by artists, including practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to represent different views, beliefs and opinions (ACAVAM114)*

*Years 5 & 6: Develop and apply techniques and processes when making their artworks (ACAVAM115)*

*Years 7 & 8: Experiment with visual arts conventions and techniques, including exploration of techniques used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to represent a theme, concept or idea in their artwork (ACAVAM118)*

*Years 7 & 8: Develop ways to enhance their intentions as artists through exploration of how artists use materials, techniques, technologies and processes (ACAVAM119)*

*Years 7 & 8: Practise techniques and processes to enhance representation of ideas in their art-making (ACAVAM121)*

## **LEARNING THROUGH ART**

Redirect students to the book cover art and ask them to consider the use of blended colour and silhouette, as well as the use of linocut pattern.

Watch [Culture in the Torres Strait Islands in Australia](#) as a class. Afterwards, view [Damaged lugger mast](#), a vinyl-cut relief print by Saibai-born artist Vincent Babia of the Koedal and Samu clans. Pose the following questions to the class:

- How does this style/technique compare to the use of silhouette on the cover?
- What are the similarities and differences between the two images?

Engage students in a class discussion about the art elements and principles most relevant to both images. Teachers can scaffold the discussion by suggesting the elements of line, space and shape, and the principles of balance, contrast, movement and pattern.

Note: Teachers can also direct students to [Badu Art Centre](#) for more works from Torres Strait Islander artists.

Find out more about famous Torres Strait Islander artists:

- Laurie Nona  
<https://www.mca.com.au/collection/artists/laurie-nona/>
- Artists at GabTuitu Cultural Centre:  
<https://shop.gabtuitu.gov.au/blogs/torres-strait-artists>

What techniques are traditionally used by Torres Strait Islander artists?

Set up a Think-Pair-Share activity where students think about a question or topic, share their thinking with a partner and then expand the 'share' into a whole-class discussion.

Provide students with different coloured paints to experiment with combinations to create aspects of nature. For example, purples, blues and black for the night sky; oranges, pinks, yellows for the sunrise; blues and greens for the ocean. Encourage students to carefully consider the colours chosen and what they think they symbolise. These colours will form the background for their artwork.

Allow time for students to practise drawing native animals in the style of Vincent Babia, then provide black card and white pencils for them to make their final copies. Once complete, have students cut out their animal shapes and glue them onto their coloured backgrounds.

Ask students to create an exhibition label for their artwork that includes:

- The artwork title and name of the artist
- The mediums/materials used
- What the background symbolises and why those colours were chosen
- What animals were chosen and why, and the creative choices behind linework and pattern

Display the artworks around the classroom for students to view. Alternatively, display around the school as an exhibition. If possible, students' families can be invited to view the artworks.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**AARON FA'AOSO** is a Torres Strait Islander film producer, director, screenwriter and actor. In 2022 he published his memoir, *So Far So Good*. Aaron is on the board of SBS and of Screen Queensland. He was the proud co-chair of the Queensland Government's Interim Truth and Treaty Body. He holds a Masters Degree of Screen Business and Leadership, from the Australian Film Television and Radio School. He is known for his roles in *RAN: Remote Area Nurse*, *East West 101*, *The Straits* and *Black Comedy*, and as the presenter of *Strait to the Plate* and *Going Places with Ernie Dingo*. Aaron is the founder and Managing Director of film and television production company, Lone Star, whose many outputs include the documentary series *Blue Water Empire*, about the history of the Torres Strait Islands.

**MICHELLE SCOTT TUCKER** is the author of *Elizabeth Macarthur: A Life at the Edge of the World* – a biography of the woman who established the Australian wool industry (although her husband received all the credit). *Elizabeth Macarthur* was shortlisted for the 2019 NSW State Library Ashurst Business Literature Prize and the 2019 CHASS Australia Book Prize. Michelle is the co-writer of Aaron Fa'Aoso's memoir, *So Far, So Good*. She is currently working on a biography of Louisa Lawson, to be released in 2027.

**LYN WHITE** has extensive experience as a primary school teacher-librarian and EAL teacher, and in 2010 completed postgraduate studies in Editing and Communications at the University of Melbourne. Lyn is passionate about children's literature and has great expertise in engaging students and teachers with quality texts. Her work with refugee children motivated her to create the acclaimed *Through My Eyes* series of books set in contemporary war zones. Lyn went on to create and edit the *Through My Eyes – Natural Disaster Zones* series set around international and Australian disasters. The novels pay tribute to the courage and resilience of children who are often the most vulnerable in post-disaster situations. Lyn is a conference presenter, runs workshops based on the *Through My Eyes* texts and has written several articles for teacher-association journals and children's literature magazines.

## ABOUT THE WRITER OF THE NOTES

**Dr Sarah Mokrzycki** lives and works on Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung land. She has a PhD on the importance of family diversity in Australian picture books, with research interests in child welfare, representation and environmentalism in children's literature. Sarah is a non-bio mum of three children from fostering backgrounds, and a passionate advocate of children at risk.

## **ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND ON THE SITES LISTED BELOW:**

### **First Nations and Country:**

First Nations: <https://www.museum.qld.gov.au/learn-and-discover/first-nations>

Connecting with Country: <https://www.qld.gov.au/firstnations/environment-land-use-native-title/connecting-with-country>

### **Climate disaster:**

Climate disaster explained in 5 minutes (video):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXvIP9Zyxss>

Guide to climate action: <https://www.unicef.org.au/unicef-youth/guide-to-climate-action?srsltid=AfmBOor6ai8hScH0VPLYy9eRsQbAjzYQr2cUI5cjA1kx8iDceGx2X8SU>

What is climate disaster: <https://www.natgeokids.com/au/discover/geography/general-geography/what-is-climate-change/>

## **ONLINE LINKS IN FULL**

### **From 'Before Reading' > Learning about the Torres Strait region'**

About the Torres Strait:

<https://www.torres.qld.gov.au/council/about-the-shire/about-the-torres-strait>

Torres Shire Council:

<https://www.torres.qld.gov.au/council/about-the-shire/about-the-torres-strait>

Culture, protocols and heritage:

<https://www.tsirc.qld.gov.au/our-communities/culture-protocols-heritage>

Our geography:

<https://www.tsirc.qld.gov.au/our-communities/our-geography>

Torres Strait history:

<https://www.tsirc.qld.gov.au/our-communities/torres-strait-history>

Torres Strait Island Regional Council:

<https://www.tsirc.qld.gov.au/>

### **From 'Before Reading' > Extension: Think-Pair-Share'**

Culture in the Torres Strait Islands in Australia (video):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3AeLa757VE>

### From 'Literature > Perspective & characterisation'

Miriam-Webster dictionary definition:

[https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/whitewash#:~:text=%3A%20to%20portray%20\(the%20past\),misrepresents%20that%20of%20nonwhite%20people](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/whitewash#:~:text=%3A%20to%20portray%20(the%20past),misrepresents%20that%20of%20nonwhite%20people)

### From 'Literature > Creative writing: literary devices'

Common literary devices:

<https://writers.com/common-literary-devices>

English idioms:

<https://www.ef-australia.com.au/english-resources/english-idioms/>

### From 'Additional learning areas: Geography & Science > Extension: Research & class discussion'

What is Mabo Day?

<https://www.indigenous.gov.au/stories/eddie-mabo-man-behind-mabo-day>

Torres Strait Climate Disaster Court Case (video):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvbBDJAhQVc>

Torres Strait Islanders Win Climate Inaction Case Against Australian Govt (video):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njdgTlIxzA8>

### From 'Additional learning areas: Science & Framework for Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages > Studying the stars'

A shark in the stars: astronomy and culture in the Torres Strait:

<https://theconversation.com/a-shark-in-the-stars-astronomy-and-culture-in-the-torres-strait-15850>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Astronomy:

<http://www.aboriginalastronomy.com.au/>



Aboriginal astronomy (video):

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/aboriginal-astronomy>

### **From 'Additional learning area: Visual art'> Learning through art'**

*Damaged lugger mast:*

<https://www.cairnsartgallery.com.au/whats-on/exhibitions/vincent-babia-koey-buwai-mab>

Moa Arts:

<https://moart.com.au/>

### **Further Reading**

Crabbe, Kay. *The Pearl-shell Diver*, Allen & Unwin, NSW, 2016

Recommended as a class text, for guided reading and read-aloud sessions.

**WORKSHEET I****Vocabulary Worksheet**

Fill in the below table for your assigned vocabulary word/s.

Word and page number:	
Phonetic pronunciation:	
Meaning/definition:	
Synonyms:	
Word origin:	
Base word, suffix/prefix:	
Use the word in a sentence:	

## WORKSHEET II

### Torres Strait Vocabulary Worksheet

Visit the corresponding pages for your assigned topic and create a slideshow that answers the following questions:

- What do these words mean?
- What is their significance to culture, spirituality and/or tradition?
- How do these words show a sense of community or togetherness?
- What do we learn about the Torres Strait islands through this language?
- How do these words highlight the interconnectedness between Country, people, identity and culture? (E.g., are things like foods, clothing and titles specific to a region or clan? What role does culture, tradition and spirituality play in the lives of people in the story?)

TITLES AND NAMES	FOOD AND COOKING	CEREMONIES	SPIRITUALITY
Bala 2 Athe 17 Aka 20 Waduwams 29	Kai Kai 13 Chicken Simur, Sop sop 21 Calamari Sambal, Coconut damper 24 Umaya pits 31 Cassava, Dawai, Guru, Taro 72	Ubu Poethay 22 Dhoeri 27 Kaliku 57 Zazi, Ngarau za, Musur, Kathig, Dibidib 99	Koedal 14 Samu 28 Tagai 69 Baidam 71 Ag Burum 88 Murrui danaw layg 90