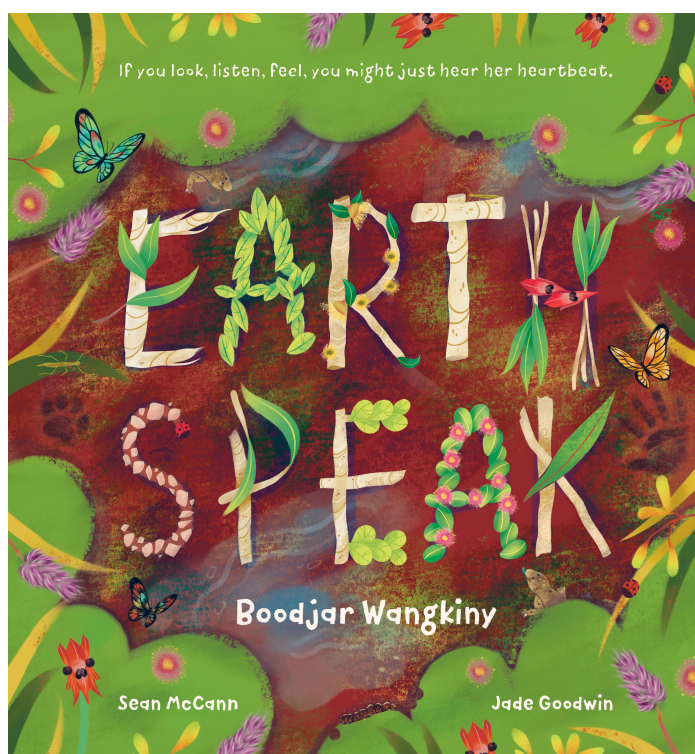


# Earthspeak

By Sean McCann and Jade Goodwin



A joyful story celebrating the natural world, the sharing of culture through Noongar language and the awe that comes from seeing, hearing and feeling how elemental forces shape the earth.

**RECOMMENDED FOR**

4 – 8 (Lower Primary)

**THEMES**

Nature, bushwalking, family, environment, Country, First Nations languages

**ISBN (AUS)**

9781761181238

## SYNOPSIS

A bush walk in a stunning landscape becomes a heartfelt invitation for children to engage with their senses, care for the environment, and learn some Noongar language words along the way.

## AUTHOR MOTIVATION

'The main theme and purpose of *Earthspeak* is to educate and continue to pass on the knowledge that has been shared and practised for over 65,000 years. I feel that in modern society there are way too many distractions that allow people to forget or to not pay attention to what is actually going on around us in nature. We are surrounded by amazing beaches, bushlands, waterways and deserts, but how many of us actually stop, 'look, listen and feel' 'the earth's heartbeat? It is so important to do yet so easily taken for granted and seldom acted upon. We can learn so much if we pay attention and focus some energy every day on what is actually happening in nature. Educating children to understand and appreciate nature is an important key to sustainability. If children don't love and appreciate nature, they will not understand it. If they don't understand it, then they won't protect it. And if they don't protect it, who will?'

**Sean McCann**

## ILLUSTRATOR MOTIVATION

'*Earthspeak* is really all about the warmth and joy we find in nature. It's such a heartfelt story that reminds us how crucial it is to connect with the earth – not just for our planet, but for our own health and happiness too. It's perfect for kids to learn about the magic of the elements – earth, wind, water, fire – and how these forces shape the land we live on. 'As a Gamilaroi woman, these themes hit home for me. Being connected to Country and feeling what the earth has to say is part of who I am. When I'm outside this often makes me feel close to my ancestors, 'which makes this book extra special to me.'

**Jade Goodwin**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Sean McCann is from Gadigal Country, NSW, but grew up on Dharawal land in southwest Sydney. In the early 1900s, his grandmother was placed into a mission on Gadigal land. Where she was taken from, and information about her parents, remains unknown. Sean currently lives on Noongar land in Perth with his wife and two young daughters. He is a small business owner, a rope access technician and a rigger working in remote areas of WA. *Earthspeak* is his first book.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Credit Travis De Vries

Jade Goodwin is an illustrator and Gamilaroi woman. Her creative journey began at an early age in her grandparents' screen-printing studio, where she would craft anything she could from the studio supplies. Her passion for creativity and illustration grew over time, eventually leading to a successful career in the children's publishing industry. She is committed to showcasing a range of perspectives through her illustrations, with the aim of inspiring children and adults alike. She has illustrated numerous books including Ash Barty's Little Ash series and *My Dream for You*.

[www.jadegoodwin.com.au](http://www.jadegoodwin.com.au)

## IN-CLASS DISCUSSIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- Before opening *EarthSpeak*, allow students time to look deeply at the cover. Read out loud the title and subtitle and ask students:
  - What do you notice about the way the title is written?  
*(Encourage students to describe how nature – leaves, sticks, flowers – is used to form the letters and what this might mean about the book's message.)*
  - The words 'Boodjar Wangkiny' are under the title. What do you think they mean, and why might the authors have chosen to include these words?  
*(Guide students in understanding that Boodjar Wangkiny comes from Noongar language and that the story will feature Noongar words that students can learn and share with their family and friends. Explain to children that Noongar is an Australian Aboriginal language, spoken by members of the Noongar community, First Nations people who live in the south-west corner of Western Australia.)*
  - The book's cover says, 'If you look, listen, feel, you might just hear her heartbeat.' Who do you think "her" refers to and why is listening to her important?  
*(Encourage students to connect this to the earth and Aboriginal perspectives on caring for Country.)*
  - What animals and plants can you see on the cover, and how do they help tell the story of the land?  
*(This question encourages observation and discussion of Australian flora and fauna, as well as their cultural significance.)*

- While opening the book, remind students that this is a very special story as it will be using Noongar language and that we can learn how to pronounce the words correctly by looking at them on the page and listening very carefully to a reading via the QR code that appears opposite the book's title page. [NB: a Glossary of Noongar words appears on the same page as the QR code].
- Listen to the story being read and turn the pages so students can look at the illustrations. Once finished, ask students what they liked about the story, what was their favourite part and how the story made them feel? Read the story again slowly and ask students to answer the following questions True or False:

1. **Marr**, wind, **kep**, water and **karla**, fire, shaped the land the family visit. [T]
2. **Marr**, wind, is created by the sun because the sun heats up **boodjar**, earth, or **kep**, water, until air gets hot and rises. [T]
3. **Karla**, fire, spreads pollen from flowers to create life. [T]
4. **Karla**, fire, is bad because it destroys all things. [F]
5. Papa says that **boodjar**, earth, is a part of us and we should **goordoo**, feel her and love her. [T]

- Close the book and invite students to explain in their own words what they think Papa meant when he said that if we **djinang**, look, **ni**, listen and **goordoo**, feel we would be able to hear **boodjar wangkiny**, earth speak? Discuss the things the family saw, heard and felt on their journey to the special place.

OR

Choose a double page spread from the book and ask students to imagine they are the child in the image. Encourage them to use sentence starters, such as, 'I see', 'I hear', 'I feel', 'I smell', 'I taste' to describe the scene. Students might also want to describe what they are thinking with the sentence starter, 'I wonder'.

- Remind students that the story features words from the Noongar language and discuss why it is important to keep First Nations languages alive. *[Reasons include that Language is a key part of cultural identity and heritage and that when people speak their traditional Language they feel connected to their ancestors, Community and the land. Also, preserving First Nations languages allows the sharing of unique stories, knowledge and ways of understanding the world.]*
- Ask students to write a simple paragraph describing what they think the earth's heartbeat would sound like and what the earth might want to say to them.
- Take your class out on a walk to a nearby natural area. While walking, point out things like interesting leaves, flowers, sticks, and rocks. Look for signs of animals, like tracks, fur or feathers. When you reach an open spot, invite students to sit down quietly and really engage all of their senses. Ask them to put their hands on their tummies and take three slow, deep breaths. After a minute, ask students to make a mental list of one thing they can see, feel, hear, smell and touch.
- Before returning to the classroom, gather some leaves, rocks, sticks and feathers that have fallen to the ground. Once back in the classroom try one or both of these art activities:
  - Give each student an A4 piece of paper and encourage them to create a scene or abstract representation of how they perceive the earth 'speaking' to them. Students can arrange and glue their collected natural items onto the paper and use crayons, coloured pencils, or markers to add details or backgrounds to their artwork.
  - Place a natural object under a piece of white paper on a clipboard. Use the side of a crayon or pencil to gently rub across the paper and watch the texture and shape appear.

- Have each student present their artwork to the class, explaining the significance of the materials they chose and how their piece represents their connection to nature. Encourage the use of descriptive language and, if possible, incorporate Noongar words learned from the book to describe their artwork.
- Research who looks after the places you have walked through. Are there groundskeepers? Is the area looked after by the local council? Is there a Landcare or 'friends of' group who looks after it? Local council websites are a great starting point for finding out.
- Invite a local traditional Elder or Custodian to deliver a Welcome to Country to your school and talk about the Land that your school is on. Consider making this event outside of school hours and inviting parents and carers to attend. This creates an opportunity for greater community understanding and in-depth discussions at home.

**A NOTE ABOUT THE USE OF NOONGAR LANGUAGE IN *EARTHSPEAK***

'We are writing to express our dedicated support for Sean McCann in relation to permission for the publication of *Earthspeak*, which includes use of the Noongar language. The Noongar Boodjar Language, Cultural Aboriginal Corporation has nurtured a special connection with Sean McCann. We passionately believe that there is no reason as to why Sean cannot use Noongar language in *Earthspeak*. We understand that Sean has no familial ties to Noongar country. However, he is an Aboriginal man who has a strong spiritual connection to Noongar country, in the south-west of Western Australia. We are confident that Sean is contributing to the revitalisation and maintenance of Australian Aboriginal languages through published materials akin to *Earthspeak*. We grant such permission through our certification as an Australian Language Centre of the Commonwealth.'

Vanessa Martin, Chairperson, and Denise Smith-Ali (OAM), Senior Linguist/CEO,  
Noongar Boodjar Language, Cultural Aboriginal Corporation

# EARTHSPEAK

