

The
SONG

WALKER

ZILLAH BETHELL
TEACHING RESOURCE PACK FOR KS2



USBORNE

The SONG WALKER

TEACHING PACK FOR AGES 9+/KS2

This Teachers' Pack takes children on a journey of discovery as they step into the enchanting world of **The Song Walker**, an extraordinary new book by Zillah Bethell, author of **The Shark Caller**.

The pack has been split into three sections, mirroring the three sections in the book, providing suggestions for a Unit of Work. Each section refers to important events and discussion points in the story, suggests cross-curricular activities, and includes a 'spotlight' extract taken from the text. Extracts are accompanied by corresponding questions that support children's reading comprehension skills.

Further online resources to support the teaching of the novel can be found at [usborne.com/gb/quicklinks/quicklink/the-song-walker](https://www.usborne.com/gb/quicklinks/quicklink/the-song-walker)

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PART 1: p. 7–109

Themes: Identity, The Australian Outback, First Country History and Culture, the Alyawarre Language, Songlines, Respect, Friendship.

PART 2: p. 112–243

Themes: Identity, First Country History and Culture, Wildlife of the Outback, Time, Friendship, Classical music.

PART 3: p. 247–35

Themes: The Stolen Generation, First Country History and Culture, The Natural World, Friendship.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY: FOOTSTEPS

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ABOUT THE BOOK

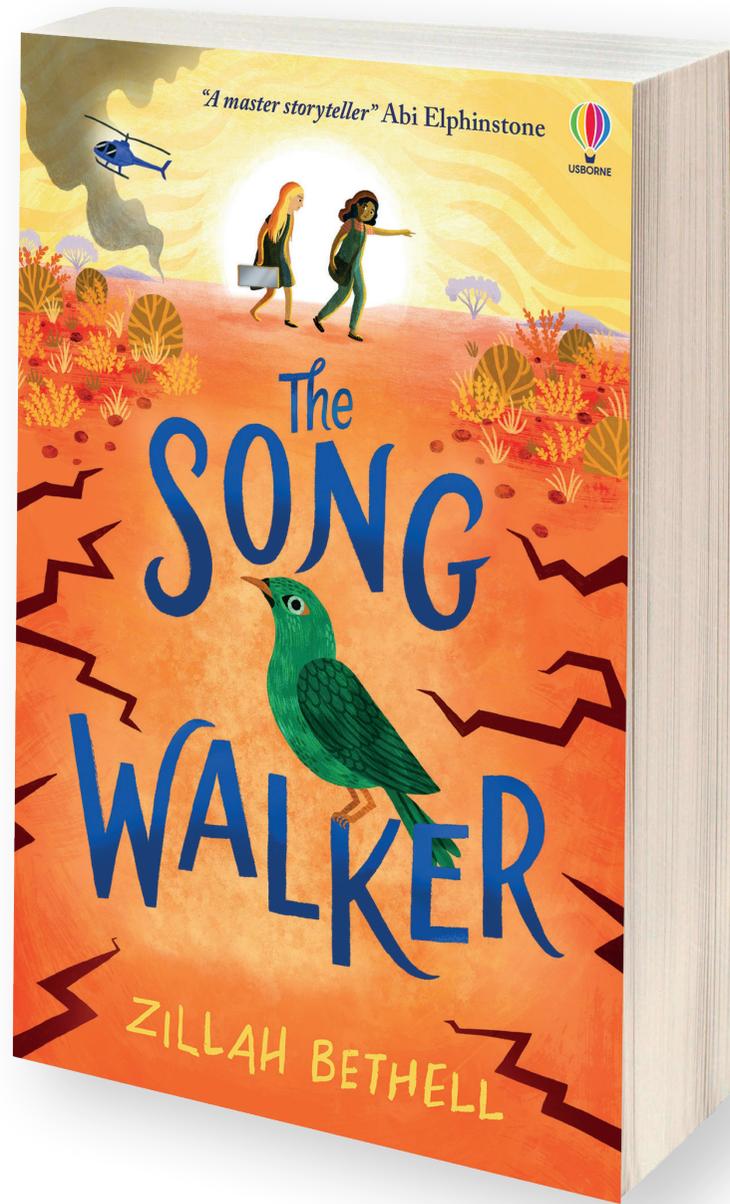
Where am I?
What am I doing here?
And... Who am I?

When a young girl wakes up in the middle of the desert, she has no idea who she is. She's wearing one shoe, a plain black dress and she's carrying a strange, heavy case. She meets Tarni, who is on a mysterious quest of her own.

Together, the two girls trek across the vast and ever-changing Australian Outback in search of answers.

Except both are hiding secrets...

An extraordinary story of friendship, courage and discovery from the author of *The Shark Caller*, winner of the Wales Book of the Year and the Edward Stanford Children's Travel Book of the Year 2022.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zillah Bethell was born in the shadow of the volcano Mount Lamington in Papua New Guinea. She grew up without shoes, toys or technology; consequently she spent a lot of time in the sea, swimming and in canoes - and occasionally, to earn money, she took tourists gold-panning in the highlands of Wau and Bulolo. Zillah's family returned to the UK when she was ten, and she was eventually educated at Oxford University and now lives in South Wales with her family.

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PART ONE



PROLOGUE AND PART 1: Fugue

p. 7 – 109

PAGES & READING QS	THEMES & REFLECTIONS	CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY
<p>p.32–34: Setting and identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What can you infer about the climate of the setting? - How do you think the narrator feels? - What is your impression of the girl? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a mind-map of everything you know about the narrator from the story so far. You can add to this mindmap as you read on and collect clues about her IDENTITY. 2. Consider what makes you you. Create a picture or collage about all the things that make up your identity. 3. Write a list of questions you think the narrator has at this point in the story. 	<p><i>Geography</i></p> <p>Research the Northern Territory in Australia. Can you locate this region on a map? What can you find out about its population, capital city, area, climate and landmarks? Look at some pictures of the landscape of the Northern Territory online.</p> <p>How would you describe it?</p>
<p>p.45: Friendship and language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do the words ‘aywerte’, ‘anaty’e’ and ‘irntirte’ mean? - What knowledge, skills and experience does Tarni have? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider the theme of FRIENDSHIP. Do you think Tarni and the narrator will be friends? Why? 2. What do Tarni and the narrator seem to have in common and how do they appear to be different? Draw a Venn diagram to compare the two characters. 	<p><i>Art, Design & Technology</i></p> <p>Create an illustrated dictionary or word map of Alyawarre words using the glossary on page 7. Keep it with you as you read on to help you understand the Alyawarre words in the text.</p>
<p>p. 69–71: Landscape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What items has Tarni made and what has she used to make them? - How does Tarni feel when she has made something? - How does the narrator feel when she sees the plane? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Draw a sketch of the desert LANDSCAPE in which the story is set. Imagine looking at this landscape from Tarni’s point of view. On your sketch, write down what you think Tarni sees, thinks and feels when she looks at the landscape around her. Now, using a different colour, do the same for the narrator. In what ways do the two characters see and experience the land differently? 	<p><i>Geography</i></p> <p>On page 71, Tarni points out the difference between the population density of the Australian outback and that of the city. What other differences are there between the outback and the city? Create a table to compare the two.</p>
<p>p. 103–104: Respect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do First Country people show respect when someone has died? - How do you think Tarni feels when the narrator uses the word ‘ridiculous’? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you think the narrator learns from this conversation? 2. Why do you think it is important to show RESPECT when learning about other people’s cultures and religions? Write a list of different ways you can show respect when somebody is sharing their cultural and religious traditions with you. 	<p><i>History</i></p> <p>Carry out some research into the history of Australia. Draw a timeline beginning when the ancestors of First Country people first arrived on the mainland tens of thousands of years ago and continuing until the present day.</p>

SPOTLIGHT EXTRACT FROM PART 1: PAGES 93–94

SONGLINES

“Music must be really important to you,” I say.

Tarni smiles. “Yeah. Songs are important. And without certain songs, we wouldn’t know our way.”

“I don’t understand. What do you mean?”

Tarni puts Candelabra’s cage on the ground and drops her canvas bag alongside him.

“The song you’ve heard me singing to myself. It’s not just a song. It’s a map. It shows my people some of the dreaming tracks.”

I lift the pandanus hat off my head and wipe the sweat from my hair. “Dreaming tracks?”

“The paths we use for travelling. You see, we don’t draw our maps. We sing them. For thousands of years our ancestors have walked their way across the country. To help them know the way, they put all the important features into a song. So, a watering hole, or a real oddshaped tree. A hill or a deadly salt pan. Things like that. Sometimes it might be the colour of the sky or a mist that gets trapped in a valley. Might be words or it might be a change in the tune or the rhythm. And as you sing the song, you name all the important things to look out for to show you that you are going in the right direction.”

There is a sudden gush of wind and I have to hold the pandanus hat on my head to keep it there. We both turn our backs to the breeze to stop dust blowing into our eyes.

“Do they work?” I ask.

Tarni coughs a vicious laugh and spits sand out from between her lips. “Of course they work! How do you think my people have managed to live in this land for hundreds of thousands of years?”

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A CLOSER LOOK

VOCABULARY

- Define the word ‘ancestor’.
- What do you think a ‘watering hole’ and ‘salt pan’ might be?

RETRIEVE

- What is a ‘dreaming track’?
- How long have Tarni’s ancestors walked across the country?
- What does Tarni mean when she says her song is ‘a map’?
- What geographical features might be included in a song?

PREDICT

- Do you think the narrator has heard about dreaming tracks or song maps before?
- What further questions do you think the narrator might have for Tarni?
- Do you think the narrator and Tarni will get to where they want to go?

INFER

- How do you think Tarni feels when she talks about her culture?
- Why do you think Tarni ‘coughs a vicious laugh’?
- What is the weather like as the characters have this conversation? Underline any evidence in the text to support your answer.
- What makes the outback a difficult terrain to navigate?

EXPLAIN

- Explain why Tarni has been singing to herself as she walks.

SUMMARISE

- Summarise what you have learnt from this extract in less than 50 words.

ACTIVITIES

- [Listen to a First Country elder sing a Songline](#). How do you feel as you listen?
- As a class, discuss the different purposes of music and song in your culture/cultures. When do people listen to or make music and why? Can you think of any songs that have helped you learn about a place or historical event?

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PART TWO

PART 2: Rhapsody

p. 111 – 243

PAGES & READING QS	THEMES & REFLECTIONS	CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY
<p>p. 125–126: History and culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describe the different rock paintings inside the cave. - What is a ‘guardian’? - What does the word ‘iridescent’ mean? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider the theme of FIRST COUNTRY HISTORY AND CULTURE. Can you retell the Dreamtime story about the Rainbow Serpent using illustrations? What does this story tell us about First Country people’s relationship to the natural world? 2. How could you be a guardian of the natural world? As a class, discuss actions you can take to help look after nature. Can you commit to trying one of these actions this week? 	<p><i>Art, Design & Technology</i> <i>History</i></p> <p>The rock paintings in the Northern Territory date back tens of thousands of years and were painted using natural materials. Have a go at creating your own paintings using natural materials such as berries, leaves, sticks, earth, clay or any other natural materials you can find!</p>
<p>p. 176–178: Identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What decision does the narrator have to make? - How does Tarni feel when the narrator makes her decision? - What does Tarni sell at the gas station? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As a class, create a conscience alley to explore the narrator’s decision. Do you think she makes the right choice? 2. The theme of IDENTITY is important in the story. Using any clues you have picked up from the story so far, write a back-story for the narrator. Who is she and how did she end up where she is? 3. Tarni says the gas station might have newspapers. What might the headlines be? 	<p><i>Science: Biology</i> <i>Art, Design & Technology</i></p> <p>Research the different animals and plants that live in the outback. How are they each adapted to their environment? Design some painted stones of your own with pictures of the animals and plants you have researched.</p>
<p>p. 217–220: Friendship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why do you think Tarni runs into the wood? - How would you describe the atmosphere of the woods? - How do you think Tarni feels? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How has Tarni and the narrator’s FRIENDSHIP changed and evolved? What do you like about their friendship now? 2. Think about a time that a friend has helped or supported you. How did you feel? 3. What do you think Debonaire means when she says, ‘Sometimes [...] it is necessary to go through a deep then deeper dark, and not to turn away’? How might this statement relate to each of the characters? 	<p><i>Literacy</i> <i>Drama</i></p> <p>As a class, choose one moment from pages 217-220. Pick one person to be Tarni and another to be the narrator. The rest of the class will be ‘sculptors’ and give instructions to the actors to help create a freeze frame of the moment. Finish by taking turns to voice the character’s inner thoughts and feelings.</p>
<p>p. 228–230: Music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What instruments does the narrator hear in her mind? - What does the word ‘staccato’ mean? - How does this extract help you understand the narrator? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MUSIC is an important theme in the story. Listen to the first part of Tchaikovsky’s violin concerto in D major opus thirty-five. See if you can hear the different instruments the narrator mentions. Can you pick out a bit that sounds like ‘an orchestral explosion’? Do you hear a ‘quick flutter of notes that sounds like a bird soaring into the sky’? How do you feel as you listen? 	<p><i>Music</i></p> <p>What is the ‘fingerboard’ of a violin? Can you draw and label a picture of a violin? Research the different sections and instruments in an orchestra. Which section do you like best? Which instrument would you like to learn?</p>

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SPOTLIGHT EXTRACT FROM PART 2: PAGES 238–239

ANCESTORS AND DESCENDANTS

“I’ve sketched you out a map.” Debonaire hands Tarni a strange piece of A4 paper folded in half. “Major landmarks to look out for. Generally, as a rule, keep the Iytwelepenty mountains on your right-hand side. Don’t go over them, just use them to guide you. Follow them and they will lead you to Karlu Karlu.”

Tarni opens up the paper for a second or two before folding it back in half and slipping it into the front pocket on her dungarees. “Thank you,” she says. “I am moving out of my people’s country now, so I don’t know the songs to guide me.”

“Then create a song,” says Debonaire.

“What?”

“Create one. Make a new song.” Debonaire points at me. “You’ve got a world-class violinist to help you, so make one.”

Tarni looks stunned. “But...that’s not what we do. We follow the songs of our ancestors—”

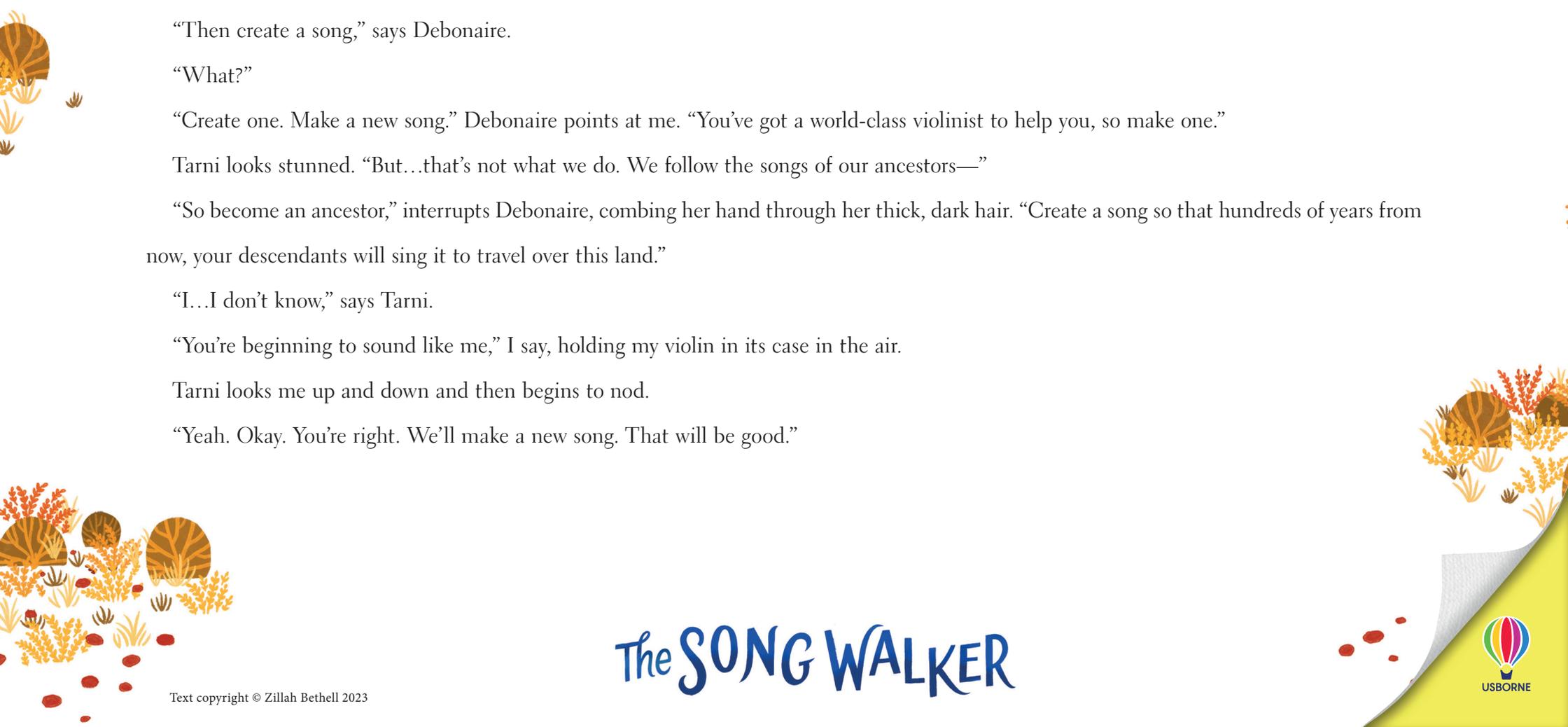
“So become an ancestor,” interrupts Debonaire, combing her hand through her thick, dark hair. “Create a song so that hundreds of years from now, your descendants will sing it to travel over this land.”

“I...I don’t know,” says Tarni.

“You’re beginning to sound like me,” I say, holding my violin in its case in the air.

Tarni looks me up and down and then begins to nod.

“Yeah. Okay. You’re right. We’ll make a new song. That will be good.”



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A CLOSER LOOK

VOCABULARY

- Define the words ‘ancestor’ and ‘descendant’.
- What does the word ‘stunned’ mean in this context? Can you think of a synonym?
- Find a phrase which shows that Debonaire thinks the narrator is a good musician.

RETRIEVE

- What item does Debonaire give Tarni?
- Where are Tarni and the narrator trying to get to?
- How can Tarni and the narrator use the Iytwelepenty mountains to help them reach their destination?
- Why can’t Tarni use her songs to navigate this part of the journey?
- What suggestion does Debonaire make?

PREDICT

- Do you think Tarni and the narrator will create their own song? What might it sound like?
- Do you think they will reach their destination? What will they find when they get there?

INFER

- What does the author’s use of ellipsis tell us about how Tarni feels when she first hears Debonaire’s suggestion?
- How do you think the narrator feels about Debonaire’s suggestion?
- How do you think Tarni feels at the end of the extract?

EXPLAIN

- What is your impression of Debonaire?

SUMMARISE

- Summarise what happens in the extract in less than 50 words.

ACTIVITIES

- Debonaire suggests that Tarni might like to make up a new song to pass down to her descendants. As a class, discuss what you would like people in thousands of years’ time to inherit from you. Are there any songs, stories, poems, traditions or pieces of art that you think would like to pass on? Why might these be useful to people living thousands of years in the future? Perhaps you could create a song, poem or piece of art based on a place that is important to you that can be passed down through time!
- [Research Karlu Karlu](#). Why is this a sacred site? Would you like to visit?

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PART THREE

PART 3: Symphony

p. 245 – 356

PAGES & READING Qs	THEMES & REFLECTIONS	CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY
<p>p. 257–259: The Stolen Generation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who were the Stolen Generation? - How many children were taken? - What were the children taught in the institution? - How do you feel when you read about the Stolen Generation? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using a copy of page 258, create an erasure poem about THE STOLEN GENERATION. Choose the words or phrases you think are the most descriptive and evocative. 2. If you could ask Tarni's grandmother 3 questions, what would you ask her? 3. Do you think it's important that people learn about the Stolen Generation? Why? Discuss with your class. 	<p><i>History</i></p> <p>Research the Stolen Generation and listen to Prime Minister Kevin's Rudd's apology speech. Can you find out how Australians mark 'National Sorry Day'? You might like to light a candle to remember the Stolen Generation.</p>
<p>p. 267–269: The natural world</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What has the narrator learnt from Tarni? - Do you think the narrator's feelings about the landscape around her have changed since the start of the story? How? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a leaflet about how to survive in the desert based on what you have learnt from Tarni. 2. Go outside and explore THE NATURAL WORLD around you. How many different plants, trees and bird species can you identify in your local area? 	<p><i>Art, Design & Technology</i></p> <p>Have a look at some paintings by contemporary First Country artists. What different styles and techniques do they use? Create a piece of art in the style of a First Country artist inspired by the natural world around you.</p>
<p>p. 280–282: Friendship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What names has the narrator been given during the story? Which do you think best describes her? - In what ways is Tarni wise? - Can you think of 3 words to describe the characters' friendship? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write a poem about FRIENDSHIP inspired by the text. You could begin by writing a list of all the things that do matter in a friendship and then all the things that don't matter! 2. Reflect upon the theme of IDENTITY. At the start of the novel, the narrator asks 3 questions: 'Where am I?', 'What am I doing here?' and 'Who am I?'. How do you think she would answer these questions now? 	<p><i>Music</i></p> <p>Compose a piece of music called 'Tarni and Tidda'. How might you use music to tell your audience about the characters and their friendship? Think about how you will transcribe your composition.</p>
<p>p. 329: Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How did Tarni feel when her sister left? - What did Tarni want to ask her sister? - What might the weather at the end of the characters' conversation symbolise? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does the narrator support Tarni? What does this show about how she has changed since the start of the story? 2. Thinking about the theme of IDENTITY, consider what makes Tarni an 'individual'. Complete the following sentence from the point of view of Tarni, as many times as you can writing your sentences on post-it notes: 'I am...'. As a class stick all of your post-it notes around a picture of Tarni. 	<p><i>PSHE/RSE</i></p> <p>When a friend or loved one is having a difficult time, empathetic listening can be a good way to support them. What does empathetic listening look like? Discuss with your class and create a list or poster.</p>

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SPOTLIGHT EXTRACT FROM PART 3: PAGES 339-340

THE SONG

The song.

The song is like a tree.

It begins in the spark of a meteor shower, the ripple and rhythm of tide and wave, the pulse and surge of earth and root. Groping underground creatures carry the song between delicate satin paws, bringing it to light where melody changes form to leaf, bark, shoot.

Song, you are like a tree.

Spreading your arms open wide in supplication, embrace. Stars tremble through your canopy, sun dapples your shade, insects nestle in your whorls, leaves rustle in your dance. That you may ever dance, move still, still so. Birds alight on your palm, and then take flight, beaked with jewelled berries that drop like colourful rain on this desert plain.

Song, you are a tree.

Ships set sail in your lifetime, cities rise, empires fall but you know nothing of this and it doesn't matter. Standing tall, even as the wind-bridled horses drum and swerve the sand with sun-molten hooves, shake your dust. No tombstone, snow or lonely flower here.

Just you.

A fragile figure in silvery hue, your hands, tiny in all this air, applauding.

“This is our song,” she says, “yours and mine.”

“This is our song,” I say, “until the end of time.”

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A CLOSER LOOK

VOCABULARY

- Read this extract then close your eyes. Which images stick in your mind?
- Underline your favourite phrase or sentence. What do you like about it?
- What is a 'meteor shower'?
- What do the words 'supplication' and 'embrace' mean?
- Why do you think the author uses the verb 'tremble' to describe the stars? What other verb could she have used?
- Define the word 'alight'.
- What do you think the phrase 'beaked with jewelled berries' means? Why do you think the author has chosen this phrase?
- What does the phrase 'wind-bridled' suggest?
- What do you see in your imagination when you read the phrase 'sun-molten hooves'?
- Can you find a phrase which suggests that the song will live for a long time?
- Can you find a phrase which suggests that the song is a positive, happy song?

RETRIEVE

- What animals are mentioned in this extract?
- What words does Tarni speak at the end of the extract? How does the narrator reply?

PREDICT

- Do you think Tarni and the narrator will return to their old lives at the end of their journey? If so, will they see each other again?

INFER

- Why do you think the author has used italics?
- Can you imagine what the song sounds like? Do you think it would be fast or slow? Loud or quiet?
- How do you think Tarni and the narrator feel about their song?
- In what ways is a song like a tree?

EXPLAIN

- Why might a tree look like it is 'applauding'?

SUMMARISE

- Can you summarise how you feel at this point in the story?

ACTIVITY

- In a small group, turn this extract into a performance poem. Think about how you will use tone, volume, pace, choral reading and movement to bring the words to life. You might like to add in sound effects to help you express the feeling and mood of the piece. When you have rehearsed your poem, perform it to your class!

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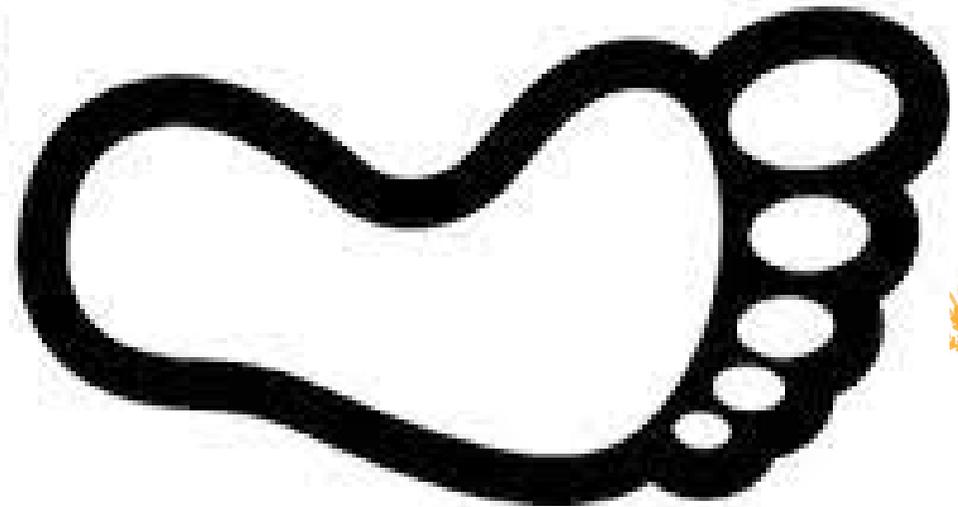
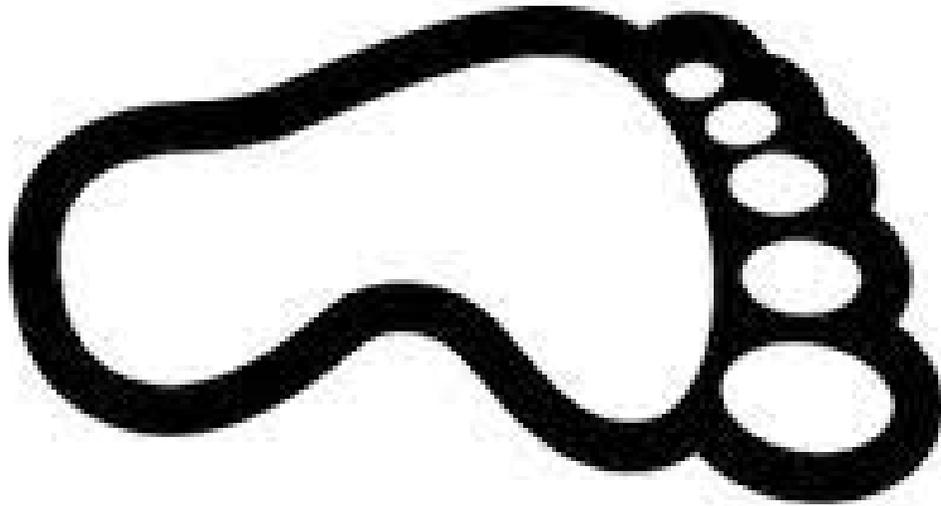


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REFLECTION FOOTSTEPS

Cut out as many 'Reflection Footsteps' as you need. On each footprint, write a personal response to the novel. You might like to write a question you still have about the story, something you've learnt, or an emotion you experienced whilst reading. Were there any bits that surprised you? What was your favourite part? Your reflection on each footprint could be in-depth or just individual words with accompanying sketches; you can be as creative as you like!

When you have completed as many footsteps as you want, display them in your classroom to remind you of what you discovered as you joined Tarni and Tidda on their journey.

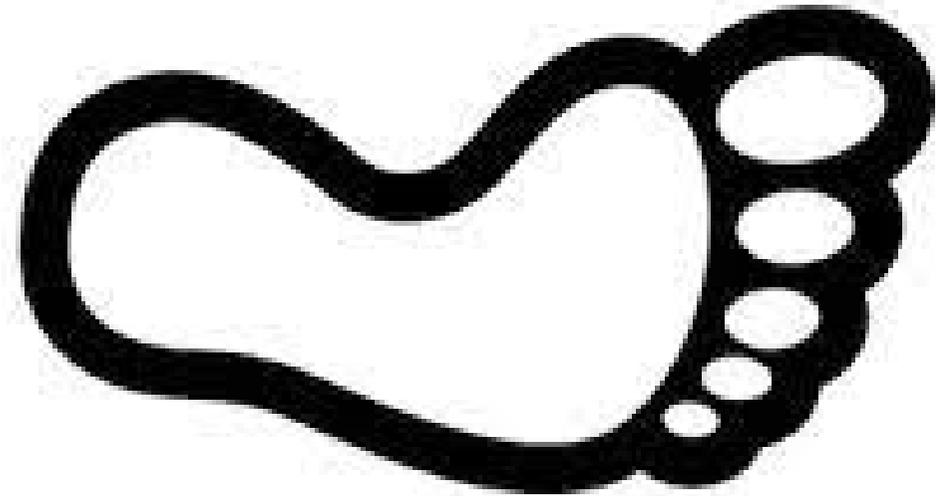
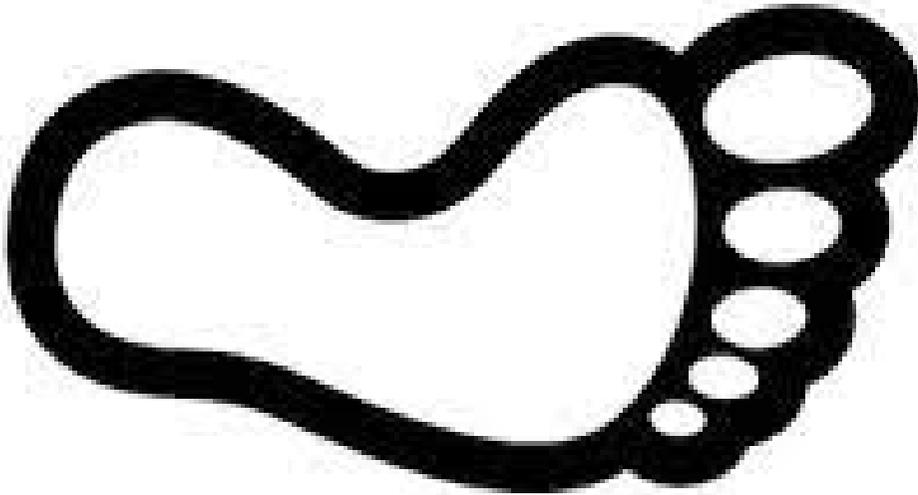
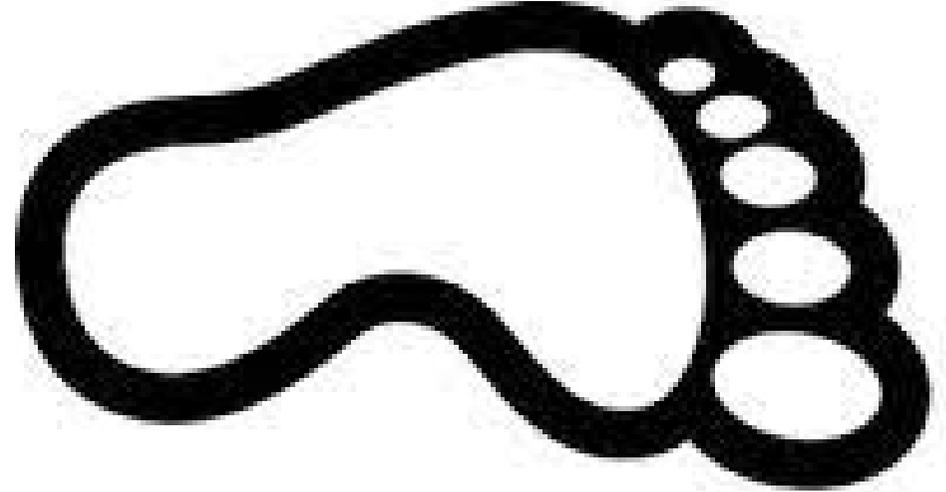
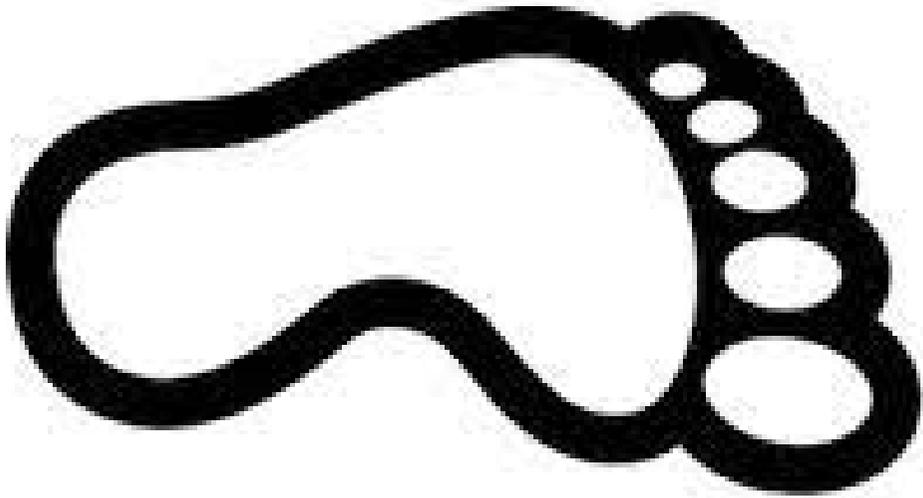


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REFLECTION FOOTSTEPS



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