



## ***Dot and the Kangaroo***

***By Ethel C Pedley***

***Illustrations by***

***Frank P. Mahony***

### **Book Summary:**

Lost and afraid in the darkening bush, Dot is befriended by a kind Kangaroo. She eats the berries of understanding and is then able to communicate with all the bush creatures, who eventually guide her home.

The captivating tale of DOT AND THE KANGAROO is told by Ethel Pedley with the magic that has made this book an Australian favourite since it was first published in 1899.

### **Themes**

Connection to place, conservation, forgiveness, stereotypes

### **General Capabilities**

Critical and creative thinking, Ethical understanding, Intercultural understanding, Literacy

### **Cross-curriculum Priorities**

Sustainability

### **Appropriate Ages:**

Years 5 and 6 (NSW Stage 3)

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Notes by Lorraine McDonald

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## Building field knowledge

- Ethel Pedley's dedication to 'the children of Australia' urges them to protect the natural environment as she fears our native animals are endangered. Have students research three websites: the [Australian Geographic latest endangered species](#) website, the [Endangered mammals of Australia](#) website and the [Our endangered animals](#) website to find out which Australian species are under threat of extinction today. In groups, students choose one type of species and create an online poster using [Postermyswall](#) or similar. The poster should describe the species with images and words, include its scientific name, its habitat and why it is endangered. The picture book, *V is for Vanishing* by Patricia Mullins, could be a suitable model for this task

(ACELY1703) (ACELY1713) (ACSSU043) (ACSSU094) (EN3-6B)

- Allocate different groups aspects of Aboriginal ceremonies and the history of the term 'corroboree' to research, for example [Aboriginal art](#). Create [jigsaw groups](#) to share the information students found.

(ACELT1608) (ACELT1613) (ACHGK033) (EN3-1A) (HT3-2)

- Together explore the concept of stereotypes. The [Difference Differently](#) website is aligned to the Australian Curriculum and is funded by DEEWR. It has a section on stereotypes and Aboriginal Australians with opportunities to analyse a video and images. A set of PowerPoint slides called 'Stereotyping Aboriginal Australians' is available through [Oxfam](#). Both these resources can be adapted to suit the class level and used as a stimulus for discussing racist attitudes towards Aboriginal Australians. Have students create a free verse poem that speaks against racism.

(ACELA1501) (ACELA1517) (ACHHK114) (EN2-11D) (HT3-4)

## Assessment: from Achievement Standards

### Can Year 5 students

- Analyse and explain literal and implied information from a variety of texts?
- Understand how language features, images and vocabulary influence interpretations of characters, settings and events?

### Can Year 6 students

- Compare and analyse information in different texts, explaining literal and implied meaning?
- Analyse and explain how language features, images and vocabulary are used by different authors to represent ideas, characters and events?

## Exploring the context of the text

- Research information about Australian national ceremonies, for example Australia Day, Anzac Day, sporting finals for different codes. Develop a chart which displays information about any symbolic or special clothing worn, any particular movements and music attached to the ceremony, any special events that occur.

(ACELY1702) (ACELY1712) (ACHHS102) (ACHHS121) (EN3-3A) (HT3-1)

- When *Dot and the Kangaroo* was written in 1899, the way many non-Aboriginal Australians spoke and thought about Indigenous Australians was very different to today. The [Aboriginal Heritage](#) website begins with the quote 'The very ink with which all history is written is merely fluid prejudice' said by American writer Mark Twain in 1897. Discuss what the quote could mean and, after reading the chapter titled 'Corroboree', ask for ideas about how the quote and the chapter may link. Model how to build evidence of how the quote was enacted in colonial Australia by locating relevant information and images on the [Aboriginal Heritage](#) website. Groups develop an oral presentation from the evidence they have located.

(ACELA1502) (ACHHS104) (ACHHS123) (EN3-1A) (EN3-8D)

- Together read [Tears in the Jungle: A Children's Adventure to Save the Orangutan](#), a picture book by two Australian brothers, Daniel and William Clarke. Their project began when Daniel, who has cerebral palsy, was 10 years old. Together use the book to identify the aspects that convey details of the social, cultural and historical contexts and to generate a general discussion about endangered species.

(ACELA1502) (ACELT1608) (ACELA1517) (ACELT1613) (EN3-7C)

- In pairs, students research information about the [platypus](#) and the other [Australian native animals](#) that Dot meets. [Scootle](#) is another resource here. Students join with another pair to share their information.

(ACELY1703) (ACSSU043) (ACSSU094) (EN3-3A)

**Assessment: from Achievement Standards****Can Year 5 students**

- Listen and ask questions to clarify content?
- Develop and explain a point of view about a text, selecting information, ideas and images from a range of resources?

**Can Year 6 students**

- Listen to discussions, clarifying content and challenging others' ideas?
- Show how specific details can be used to support a point of view?

**RICH ASSESSMENT TASKS**

Students research the Indigenous people and their customs, and the native flora and fauna of the local area. They create a timeline (interactive if appropriate) that indicates the different stages of growing European use of the land and what happened to the local Indigenous people. Students design a digital presentation that describes the Indigenous plants and animals and indicates how and when alien species of both were introduced. They then plan possibilities for local environmental projects that would be within the students' capabilities. Students can read the case studies on the [Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative \(AuSSI\)](#) for ideas to plan and enact.

(ACELY1704) (ACELY1714) (ACSHE217) (ACSHE220) (EN3-7C)



## Responding to the text

- In the story, Pedley presents contrasting attitudes towards the Australian bush. Together read and re-read the opening paragraph in Chapter 1 and model how to list some words and phrases that describe the scene before Dot is found. Hand over to students to complete. Use their lists to provide evidence for what attitudes towards the bush are evident. As a class discuss i) if this view of the bush could relate to Dot's situation and ii) what effect is Dot's situation intended to have on the reader.

(ACELA1512) (ACELT1795) (ACELA1525) (ACELT1615) (EN3-5B)

- Together compare the opening scene in Chapter 1 to the description of the bush in Chapter 4, paragraphs 4, 5, 6, 7. Students list some of the words and phrases from each of these paragraphs and in pairs discuss the attitudes towards the bush presented here. As a class comment on whether both views of the bush could be accurate and what positive or negative experiences or knowledge the students might have of the Australian bush.

(ACELA1512) (ACELT1795) (ACELA1525) (ACELT1615) (EN3-5B)

## Assessment: from Achievement Standards

### Can Year 5 students

- Listen to discussions, clarifying content and challenging others' ideas?

### Can Year 6 students

- Describe how events, characters and settings in texts are depicted and explain their own responses to them?

## Exploring plot, character, setting and theme

- The plot of the story tells of Dot and Kangaroo's quest to find Dot's home. In Chapter 8, 'A leap for life', the language creates suspense as both characters attempt to escape from the Aboriginal hunters. Select a prose paragraph and with the students examine what words and phrases create suspense. Together discuss the differences between the prose paragraph and how the language of the dialogue creates suspense. Give a Venn diagram to students to complete, comparing similarities and differences in the way suspense is created in different paragraphs and dialogue.

(ACELT1611) (ACELT1617) (EN3-5B)

- A simple way to consider characterisation is to explore how i) the character is described, ii) what actions he/she carries out, and iii) what the character says. Kangaroo is a character who has a range of views. Draw up a 3-column grid and ask students to skim the chapters they have read to find examples of a) Kangaroo's description, b) Kangaroo's actions and c) what Kangaroo says. Use this evidence to discuss as a class what Kangaroo's qualities are and what she values.

(ACELY1701) (ACELY1711) (EN3-5B)

- 'The Black Humans kill and devour us; but they, even, are not so terrible as the Whites, who delight in taking our lives and torturing us just as an amusement' (Chapter 3, 'Kangaroo'). Re-read this section of the chapter and discuss what Kangaroo implies about the reasons why the Black and White Humans kill the native animals. In groups, students create a list of three points about what Pedley's theme or significant message may be and prepare to justify their points.

(ACELY1699) (ACELY1709) (EN3-3A)

## **Assessment: from Achievement Standards**

### **Can Year 5 students**

- Understand how language features, images and vocabulary influence interpretations of characters, settings and events?
- Describe how events, characters and settings in texts are depicted and explain their own responses to them?

### **Can Year 6 students**

- Describe how events, characters and settings in texts are depicted and explain their own responses to them?
- Select and use evidence from a text to explain their response to it?

## **RICH ASSESSMENT TASKS**

What differences in the values, attitudes and beliefs about this Australian environment are implied in the story? Have students create some digital charts, (see [Google charts](#), for example) which display the positive and negative values, attitudes and beliefs stated or implied by the various participants in the narrative – that is, the animals, the Blacks and the Whites – about the land, about the indigenous and introduced animals, and about each other.

Students research three different environments around Australia, and groups select one environment for a detailed focus. In groups students examine the

traditional Indigenous lifestyle in their location and the current use of the area by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Students can present their research through a compare/contrast graphic organiser, such as [here](#). Include research on Indigenous [traditional tools and technology](#) and the [hunting](#) practices employed in the past and today. Students include information on any current legal hunting rights Indigenous people have in the area.

Students adapt a scene, or create a new scene for *Dot and the Kangaroo*, that dramatically demonstrates one or two of the range of *attitudes, values and beliefs* stated or implied in the story. Their short improvisation includes at least some characters from the narrative and a new character can be introduced, if needed, to emphasise their focus. After rehearsals, students perform their scenes and the audience names the focus attitudes, values and beliefs they saw performed. Students develop and publish a script for their improvised scene.

(ACELT1608) (ACELY1704) (ACELY1796) (ACELT1613) (ACELY1714) (ACELY1816)  
(ACHHS104) (ACHHS123) (EN3-7C) (EN3-8D)

## Examining text structure and organisation

- On graph paper, or with an app such as [DigiGraph](#), have students draw up a [plot profile](#), which is a combination of a timeline of the events and the level of excitement or suspense. As the chapters are read, students plot the time (Day 1, 2, 3 or morning, afternoon, evening) and the level of suspense that the animals in the chapter create for Dot and the Kangaroo. After each reading, discuss together how the plot builds momentum in different ways.  
(ACELA1797) (ACELA1518) (EN3-5B) (EN3-7C)
- Despite Dot's predicament, there are many humorous moments in the story, for example, the scenes with the platypus, the koala and the court. Select one of these scenes and decide with the students what humour is created. Together examine the scene for its humorous language and characterisation. Have students list examples of language that create humour in the scene.  
(ACELA1512) (ACELA1518) (EN3-6B) (EN3-7C)
- Platypus complains about how he has been treated by white colonial naturalists. Students read the scene closely to work out what his complaints are. In groups, students research how environmental scientists work with native animals today. Divide the students into two groups to prepare for a [polarised debate](#) on whether they agree that Platypus' complaints are justified.  
(ACELY1700) (ACELY1710) (AC SIS231) (AC SIS232) (EN3-1A)

## Assessment: from Achievement Standards

### Can Year 5 students

- Describe how events, characters and settings in texts are depicted?
- Demonstrate understanding of grammar?
- Make presentations and contribute actively to class and group discussions, taking into account other perspectives?

### Can Year 6 students

- Select and use evidence from a text?
- Demonstrate understanding of grammar?
- Make presentations and contribute actively to class and group discussions, using a variety of strategies for effect?

## Examining grammar & vocabulary

- Students review their list of examples of language that create humour. Together analyse two different examples for their grammatical construction. Select two examples for students to analyse in pairs or independently. Discuss the grammatical choices made by the author. Students compose a short scene using one of the grammatical strategies they have explored.

(ACELA1508) (ACELA1518) (EN3-5B)

- There is much curious vocabulary in this story. Chapters 4 and 8 both have many unusual words, including **archaic language** and **idioms**. With a partner, students skim-read the chapter to underline or list examples of words they do not recognise, which may include such idiomatic expressions as 'Pon my word'. Demonstrate how they can use their knowledge of known vocabulary and different word patterns to work out what the word or the expression could mean and how they might be pronounced or read. Students can check their results with a dictionary or thesaurus (though all the idioms or archaic language examples may not be recorded). Consider when the story was written and discuss why there might be so many curious words in this story.

(ACELA1512) (ACELA1526) (EN3-5B)

## Examining visual and multimodal features

- Dot did not understand the meanings symbolised by the body painting, strong movements, and music/sounds of the **Aboriginal ceremony**. Divide students into groups to research different aspects of Aboriginal ceremonies: one group collects **images** of ceremonial body paint and compare the materials from which it was, and is now, made; a second group listens to some examples of **Indigenous music** and researches information about **the instruments** are used; a third group explores the **purpose** of the body paint, the music and movements, and views the YouTube clip *Aboriginal Kangaroo Dance*. Student groups create a multimodal presentation of their research and include comments on the impact the different aspects were intended to have.

(ACELY1704) (ACELY1714) (EN3-7C)



- The original drawings are by Frank Mahoney who was a well-known Australian artist in 1899. Together review the **original images** and examine how they foreground the different animals that Dot and Kangaroo meet. Model how to make connections between the relevant language of the text and what the image portrays. Together discuss if the images offer any extra information about the animals. Students complete a two-column grid, listing the information about the animals available from the images in one column and the information from the language in the second column. Students comment on whether they gain most information from the images or the language.

(ACELT1608) (ACELY1708) (EN3-8D)

- With students, compare the images for how they are drawn: are the shapes curved (meaning natural and organic) or straight (meaning mechanical)? Do the animals look away from the reader (offer) or at the reader (demand)? Are the animals and Dot in close-up or more distant? What is placed more to the centre of the image? Students evaluate the effect these decisions have on the viewer.

(ACELT1795) (ACELY1801) (EN3-3A)

### Assessment: from Achievement Standards

#### Can Year 5 students

- Understand how language features, images and vocabulary influence interpretations of characters, settings and events?

#### Can Year 6 students

- Analyse and explain how language features, images and vocabulary are used by different authors to represent ideas, characters and events?

### RICH ASSESSMENT TASKS

This section on examining literature explores the use of suspense, humour, vocabulary and images in *Dot and the Kangaroo*. Students select a picture book appropriate for their level and examine how these four elements are deployed in the new text. Students post a review of the picture book, commenting on the use of these elements and their effectiveness on a class wiki or blog. When Dot saw the Aboriginal ceremony, the dancers' appearance and movements troubled her. Many ancient cultures use images that are intended to frighten or impress others, such as the Chinese dragon or the British lion. Students construct a **Pinterest** board that displays images of different cultural ceremonies in which the participants are **dressed in unique ways**. Both traditional and contemporary ceremonies can be included.

(ACELT1795) (ACELY1704) (ACELY1707) (ACELT1615) (ACELY1714) (ACELY1717)  
 (EN3-7C) (EN3-8D)

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