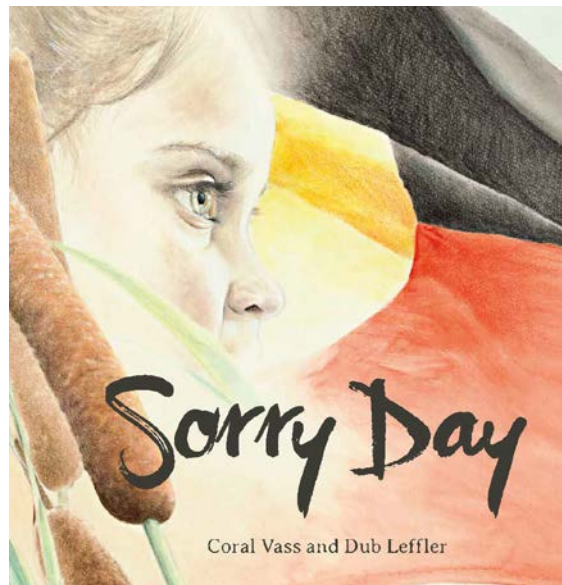


TEACHERS' NOTES

SORRY DAY

written by Coral Vass, illustrated by Dub Leffler



Published by National Library of Australia, ISBN: 978-0-642-27903-3

Recommended Year Levels: Years 3–6

Author: [Coral Vass](#)



Coral Vass was born in Sydney, and has also lived in Bangladesh, Melbourne, Queensland and Japan.

Coral often runs writing workshops for children to help them shape their own stories, encouraging literacy and creativity from a young age. Her books are predominantly fiction, but also include topics of Australian history, such as *Meet Don Bradman* released in early 2017. Coral lives by the beach in Victoria with her husband and four children.

Sorry Day is her eighth book.

Illustrator: Dub Leffler



Dub Leffler grew up in Quirindi, New South Wales, as one of 13 children. He is a descendent of the Bigambul and Mandandanji people of south-west Queensland.

His art career has included not only book authorship and illustration but also mural creation, animation and teaching.

In 2012, a picture book he wrote and illustrated, *Once There Was a Boy*, was a finalist in the Deadly Awards (Outstanding Achievement in Literature category) and was shortlisted for the Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year Awards (Indigenous Children category).

Australian Curriculum Content: *Sorry Day*

- Learning Areas
 - Humanities and Social Sciences
 - The Arts
- Cross-curriculum Priorities
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures
- General Capabilities
 - Personal and Social Capability
 - Critical and Creative Thinking
 - Ethical Understanding
- Digital Classroom
 - Year 3 nla.gov.au/digital-classroom/year-3/
 - Connections to Country
 - Australia Day
 - Year 4 nla.gov.au/digital-classroom/year-4/
 - First peoples
 - Contact
 - Communication
 - Year 5 nla.gov.au/digital-classroom/year-5/
 - Indigenous experiences
 - Frontier conflict
 - Year 6 nla.gov.au/digital-classroom/year-6/
 - Neighbour and his bravery
 - Edward Koiki Mabo

THE STORY

Maggie holds tight to her mother as they await the long anticipated apology to the Stolen Generations by the Prime Minister. In the excitement of the crowd, Maggie loses touch of her mother's hand and is lost. She is reunited with her mother but the faces and memories of the Stolen Generations are all around them.

Two stories entwine in this captivating retelling of the momentous day when then Prime Minister of Australia Kevin Rudd acknowledged the sorrows of the past and said 'sorry' to Indigenous children who were taken from their homes.

Sorry Day includes a foreword by Lee Joachim, Chair of Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative and Director of Research and Development for Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

These are activities or questions to look at before reading to prepare students for the concepts/themes explored in the book. They are not necessarily curriculum based.

- Look at the cover of the book with the class. What do you think the book will be about? What makes you say that?
- Why do we apologise?
- What is the difference between official and personal apologies?
- Have there been any apologies to groups in history by cities, governments or countries?

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM CONTENT: HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (HASS)

Year 3

History

Content description: The importance of Country/Place to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples who belong to a local area (ACHASSK062)

Elaborations:

- liaising with Community to identify original language groups of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Peoples who belong to the local area and exploring the relationship between language, Country/Place and spirituality (this is intended to be a local area study with a focus on one language group; however, if information or sources are not readily available, another representative area may be studied)

- listening to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Elders, grandparents and older community members tell stories associated with the local language groups and the land they belong to
- discussing when to use 'Acknowledgement of Country' and 'Welcome to Country' at ceremonies and events to respectfully recognise the Country/Place and traditional custodians of the land, sea, waterways and sky

Activity: Traditional Custodians

Use the school library and local council websites to find out about the Traditional Custodians of the land your school is built on and the land your family lives on. Find out five facts about the Traditional Custodians, such as the languages they speak and the stories associated with these languages.

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Does your school have a 'Welcome to Country' statement? Have you ever heard one, for example at an event or in a public building? Write out a 'Welcome to Country' statement.
- Why do you think this statement is used at many ceremonies and public events?
- Discuss the meaning of 'Traditional Custodians of this Land' and 'Elders'. Why is it important to acknowledge and pay respect to Elders both past and present?

Content description: Days and weeks celebrated or commemorated in Australia (including Australia Day, Anzac Day and National Sorry Day) and the importance of symbols and emblems (ACHASSK064)

Elaborations:

- identifying and discussing the historical origins of an important Australian celebration or commemoration
- generating a list of local, state and national symbols and emblems (for example, club emblems, school logos, flags, floral emblems, the Commonwealth Coat of Arms) and discussing their origins, use and significance
- examining the symbolism of flags (for example, the Australian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags) and recognising special occasions when they are flown (for example, all three flags are flown during NAIDOC Week, National Reconciliation Week, National Sorry Day and Mabo Day) and the roles, rights and responsibilities the community has when observing protocols around flag flying

Activity: Flags

- Research the Australian, Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal flags. What do the various symbols on each flag represent?
- Design a new Australian flag that respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and reflects all Australians.

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- What are we celebrating on Australia Day, 26 January?
- Make a list of annual events or days when we celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in Australia?

- Some people have suggested changing the date of Australia Day to 26 May. In groups, discuss whether this date would be better than 26 January. What are the arguments for and against changing the date?
- Write a letter to the Prime Minister making a case to either keep 26 January as Australia Day or change it.

Content description: Celebrations and commemorations in places around the world (for example, Chinese New Year in countries of the Asia region, Bastille Day in France, Independence Day in the USA), including those that are observed in Australia (for example, Christmas Day, Diwali, Easter, Hanukkah, the Moon Festival and Ramadan) (ACHASSK065)

Elaborations:

- comparing the significance of national days in different countries, looking at why they developed and elements they have in common
- exploring through secondary sources significant events of cultures or countries around the world, including national days, and discussing whether they are celebrations or commemorations
- investigating the origins and significance of some international celebrations or commemorations (for example, the International Day of Peace)
- investigating the origins and significance of celebrations important to particular cultural groups in Australia and in other places of the world

Activity: National Reconciliation Week and National Sorry Day

- Use the school library and online sources (see Further Reading below) to investigate National Reconciliation Week and National Sorry Day. Find out:
 - When the annual celebration is held?
 - Why the annual celebration is held?
 - What is happening/happened in your local area to celebrate these events this year?
- Design posters to promote and celebrate National Reconciliation Week and National Sorry Day at your school.

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss ways your class can raise awareness and promote National Reconciliation Week and National Sorry Day at your school. Talk with the school principal about how your school can celebrate these as annual events.

Year 4

Civics and Citizenship

Content description: The differences between ‘rules’ and ‘laws’, why laws are important and how they affect the lives of people, including experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACHASSK092)

Elaborations:

- investigating the impact of laws on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (for example, environmental laws, native title laws and laws concerning sacred sites)

Activity: Laws

- Write a list of some of the laws that were imposed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- From your list, choose one law to focus on and answer these questions:
 - In what ways did this law impact the life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?
 - In what ways did it affect later generations?

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss the effects of the Assimilation Policy, which was introduced in Australia from approximately 1951 to 1962.
- Why do you think the Prime Minister apologised for the effects of the Assimilation Policy?
- Do you think the 'Bringing Them Home' Inquiry and the National Sorry Day speech 'make right' the wrongs caused by the Assimilation Policy in Australia?
- Do you think the National Apology was a significant step towards healing the wounds of the past? What more needs to be done?

Year 5

Civics and Citizenship

Content description: How people with shared beliefs and values work together to achieve a civic goal (ACHASSK118)

Elaborations:

- examining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and the services they provide
- discussing ways people resolve differences (for example, through negotiation and Reconciliation)

Activity: Reconciliation

- Make a comic strip illustrating significant events in the path towards Reconciliation. Events might include the '1967 Australian Referendum', the 'Bringing them Home Inquiry' and the National Sorry Day speech. In your illustrations, show how the government or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations resolved differences in various ways. Was this achieved through conflict, negotiation or reconciliation?

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- What is the dictionary definition of 'reconciliation'?
- What does reconciliation mean in terms of all Australians? Has this been done well?
- Imagine you are the Prime Minister of Australia. What more would you do to promote Reconciliation?

- What does 'Closing the Gap' mean?
- Look at the different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and the services they provide (including education, health, justice, etc.). How do these services help 'Close the Gap'?

Year 6

History

Content description: Experiences of Australian democracy and citizenship, including the status and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, migrants, women and children. (ACHASSK135)

Elaborations:

- investigating the lack of citizenship rights for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Australia, illustrated by controls on movement and residence, the forcible removal of children from their families leading to the Stolen Generations, and poor pay and working conditions
- investigating the stories of individuals or groups who advocated or fought for rights in twentieth-century Australia (for example, Jack Patten or the Aborigines Progressive Association)
- investigating the experiences of democracy and citizenship of children who were placed in orphanages, homes and other institutions (for example, their food and shelter, protection, education and contacts with family)

Activity: Lived Experience

- Choose one significant Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander who was affected by the Assimilation Policy or who fought for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights, and research their life. Examples might include Eddie Mabo, Faith Bandler or Adam Goodes.
- Design ten questions you could ask your chosen person, to find out more about their life and their experience.

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Look at some of the websites listed in the Further Reading section below.
- Investigate the changes that have taken place since the National Sorry Day speech in 1998, and discuss what still needs to happen in Australia in order to bring about equality and reconciliation. Does an apology fix the problem? What happens next?
- There has been much discussion about the best way forward for a referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's Constitution. What are the obstacles? What still needs to happen for this change to take place? Who are the stakeholders?

Content description: The contribution of individuals and groups to the development of Australian society since Federation (ACHASSK137)

Elaborations:

- considering notable individuals in Australian public life across a range of fields (for example, the arts, science, sport, education), including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, a range of cultural and social groups, and women and men drawn from the National Living Treasures list, the Australian Dictionary of Biography or the Australian Honours lists)
- considering the contribution of groups and organisations in the development of Australia in the twentieth century (for example, the CSIRO, environmental action groups, farming cooperatives)

Activity: Significant Contributors

- Choose one significant Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander who has contributed to the development of Australia. It could be in the area of politics, medicine or teaching, for example.
- Collate a biography and present it to the class as a children's picture book or an illustrated talk.

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss the following question in your class: Are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have made a significant contribution to this country celebrated as much or in the same ways as equally significant non-Indigenous Australians?

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM CONTENT: THE ARTS

Years 3 and 4

Visual Arts

Content description: Explore ideas and artworks from different cultures and times, including artwork by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to use as inspiration for their own representations (ACAVAM110)

Elaborations:

- researching artworks of different styles and artists from different times and cultures to inspire their own representations in forms such as printmaking and drawing, and styles such as realistic or expressive
- considering viewpoints, meanings and interpretations: for example, what is this painting telling us about the past? How does the artwork use visual conventions to convey meaning? How did the artist work within a space, and at this time? How and why did they innovate their practice?
- exploring ways to represent their ideas using visual conventions from different historical, social or cultural contexts
- experimenting with visual conventions to create particular visual effects in representations
- identifying and explaining choices in art making, including forms, styles and visual conventions in their artworks, and influences of other artists on their artworks

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Look at the colour choices and the style of illustration in this book. Why do you think the illustrator chose to use particular colours, representing past and present, and how is this style of illustration significant to you? How do the illustrations tell the story?
- Imagine seeing the illustrations without the text. What details in the illustrations tell you that the book is set in the past and the present? (You could consider clothing, technology, transport, even the colours.) Do you understand what's happening in this story without the text?
- What illustrations do you like the best and why? Which illustrations did you find most powerful or emotional?

Years 5 and 6

Visual Arts

Content description: Explore ideas and practices used by artists, including practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to represent different views, beliefs and opinions (ACAVAM114)

Elaborations:

- selecting and manipulating combinations of materials and techniques
- exploring cross-media effects and characteristics of representation when making artworks inspired by observation or imagination, for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art from the local community, graffiti art, graphic design, or manga art
- trialling different ways to represent views, beliefs or opinions in their artworks in response to exploration of how artists communicate their views, beliefs and opinions through art
- making aesthetic choices about representation and being able to explain their choices describing the visual conventions and processes

Activity: Indigenous Art

- Choose a piece of work from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander artist. What do you believe this artist is trying to convey? When was it produced and why would that be significant in terms of how this artist was experiencing Australia at the time?
- Design a similar piece of art work, using this artist's style.

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Research the biography of Dub Leffler, the illustrator of *Sorry Day*. How has his life experience and cultural heritage shaped the creation of this book?
- How do the colour choices and style of illustration affect you emotionally? Do you have an emotional response to looking at these illustrations?

CONCLUDING ACTIVITIES

Creative Response: Art, Musical/Dramatic Performance

- Write a song focusing on the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were removed from their families and placed in orphanages, homes and other institutions. Think about how they may have felt to be taken away from their mothers and fathers, and deprived of the privilege of learning about their culture and heritage. Extension: make a video to accompany the song.
- Write a short play following the life of one young Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander who was taken from his or her family and became one of the Stolen Generations.
- Draw or paint a picture to illustrate the importance of the National Apology in paving the road to reconciliation.

Further Reading

Children's Books

Welcome to Country by Aunty Joy Murphy, illustrated by Lisa Kennedy (2016)

My Australian Story: Our Race for Reconciliation by Anita Heiss (2017)

Our Island by the Children of Gununa, with Alison Lester and Elizabeth Honey (2014)

Fair Skin Black Fella by Renee Fogorty (2010)

In Your Dreams by Sally Morgan, illustrated by Bronwyn Bancroft (2014)

Big Rain Coming by Katrina Germein, illustrated by Bronwyn Bancroft (2002)

No Way Yirrikipayi! by the Children from Milikapiti School, Melville Island, with Alison Lester (2015)

Sister Heart by Sally Morgan (2015)

Playground: Listening to Stories from Country and from Inside the Heart by Nadia Wheatley, illustrated by Ken Searle (2010)

As I Grew Older: The Life and Times of a Nunga Growing up along the River Murray by Ian Abdulla (2014)

Sally's Story: My Place for Young Readers by Sally Morgan (1990)

Welcome to My Country by Laklak Burarrwanga and Family (2013)

The Girl from the Great Sandy Desert by Jukuna Mona Chuguna and Pat Lowe, illustrated by Mervyn Street (2015)

My Home Broome by Tamzyne Richardson and Bronwyn Houston (2012)

Two Mates by Melanie Prewett, illustrated by Maggie Prewett (2012)

Dingo's Tree by Gladys Milroy and Jill Milroy (2012)

Once There Was a Boy by Dub Leffler (2011)

Shake a Leg by Boori Monty Pryor and Jan Ormerod (2011)

Wandihnu and the Old Dugong by Elizabeth and Wandihnu Wymarra, illustrated by Benjamin Hodges (2007)

Websites

<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/>

<http://www.reconciliationsa.org.au/for-schools/ideas-for-classrooms>

<http://www.indigenous.gov.au/news-and-media/event/national-reconciliation-week>

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/digibook/618742/national-sorry-day>

<http://www.schooltoz.nsw.edu.au/homework-and-study/other-subjects-and-assignments/aboriginal-reconciliation>

<https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/people/what-you-need-to-know-about-reconciliation>

<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/>

Other Sources

[Bringing Them Home Oral History Project](#), with over 300 interviews collected between 1998 and 2002 of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and others, such as missionaries, police and administrators, involved in or affected by the process of child removals.

[Mura Gadi](#), materials in the National Library of Australia's manuscripts, pictures and oral history collections related to Australian Indigenous people

[Sorry Day 2008](#), materials in the National Library of Australia's manuscripts, pictures and oral history collections related to National Sorry Day

[Apology to the Stolen Generations by Craig MacKenzie](#), photographs of the Apology by the National Library of Australia

[Apology to the Stolen Generations by Damian McDonald](#), photographs of the Apology by the National Library of Australia

[Indigenous Peoples and Cultures of the Australian Capital Territory and Region by Loui Seselja](#), photographs of Indigenous ceremonies, events, activists and leaders

[Sorry Day, PM Apology to the Stolen Generations Live Telecast, Perth CBD, 13 February 2008](#) videorecording

Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Parliamentary paper

Journey of Healing: National Anniversary of Sorry Day by National Sorry Day Committee (1999)

Many Voices: Reflections on Experiences of Indigenous Child Separation by Doreen Mellor and Anna Haebich (Eds) (c.2002)

Sorry: More Than a Word: An Exhibition of Photos by Wayne Quilliam and Mervyn Bishop, from the Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, 13 February 2008 by The Koori Mail (c.2009)