

Tales from the Bush Mob: Willy-willy Wagtail

Written and illustrated by Helen Milroy

Teacher Notes prepared by Christina Wheeler

OVERVIEW

Tales from the Bush Mob is a series of books about the Bush Mob, a group of animals that works together to solve problems. A rich landscape of characters and places populate this series and include Platypus, Koala, Emu, Wombat, Kookaburra, Echidna, Kangaroo and Gusto, the wind. Places include Willy Wagtail's Tree, Dingo's Den, Old Billabong, Bird Meeting Place, Cockatoo's Nesting Trees, Top Camp and Emu Race Track.

Willy-willy Wagtail is the first book in the series and goes back to before Bush Mob get together and nobody understands each other – and there are lots of fights. One day there is a terrible bush fire and Willy Wagtail, Gusto (the wind) and Crow get all the Bush Mob to work together to save the community. For the first time, everyone understands each other and Dingo takes charge and leads all the animals to safety. Dingo is now Boss Dog and is head of the Bush Council, with Willy Wagtail and Crow – the Bush Mob is formed. The next two titles are *The Emu Who Ran through the Sky* (July 2020) and *The Sweetest Egg of All* (October 2020).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

Helen Milroy (MB BS CertChildPsych W.Aust., FRANZCP) is a born storyteller and a talented artist. She is a descendant of the Palyku people of the Pilbara region of Western Australia but was born and educated in Perth. She studied Medicine at the University of Western Australia, worked as a General Practitioner and Consultant in Childhood Sexual Abuse at Princess Margaret Hospital for children for several years before completing specialist training in Child and Adolescent psychiatry.

Helen's work and research interests include holistic medicine, child mental health, recovery from trauma and grief, application of Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous health curriculum development, implementation and evaluation, Aboriginal health and mental health, and developing and supporting the Aboriginal medical workforce.



THEMES

- Perseverance
- Leadership
- Courage
- Bushfires
- Aboriginal Australians - Social Life and Customs
 - o Nature
 - o Stories
 - o Community
 - o Language

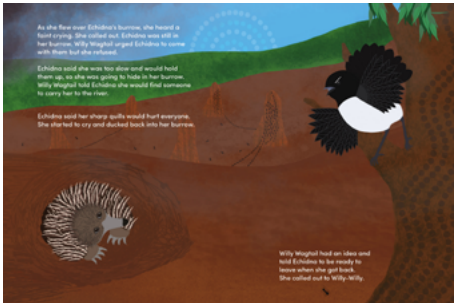
AUDIENCE AND WRITING STYLE

Tales from the Bush Mob: Willy-willy Wagtail is a collection of three short stories that share the importance of language, stories and community to First Nations' cultures. Set long ago when nobody spoke the same language, Willy Wagtail is determined to learn the different languages so that her community can function. During this time, she befriends a cranky old crow and the wind; these relationships comes to the fore when a bushfire threatens the animals who have to work together in order to survive. These stories emphasise the value of respect for and partnership with nature, as well as the importance of traditional ways of life. It also highlights that courage, perseverance and wisdom binds communities together. Because of its themes and bushfire setting, *Tales from the Bush Mob: Willy-willy Wagtail* is suited to audiences ranging from early childhood through to Year 5.



CLASSROOM IDEAS CONT.

- Retell *How Willy Wagtail Saved the Bush Mob* in the role of one of the other animals such as Dingo or Echidna.
- What can you tell about Willy Wagtail and Echidna from the illustrations in this page opening?



- How important are languages to the various Aboriginal Nations throughout Australia? What does *Tales from the Bush Mob: Willy-willy Wagtail* share with us about different languages but similar beliefs and values?
- Use *Tales from the Bush Mob: Willy-willy Wagtail* to stimulate an inquiry into the impact of bushfires on environments and communities, and how people respond.
- How does *Tales from the Bush Mob: Willy-willy Wagtail* show the role of stories throughout the many Aboriginal Nations? Why is it important that such stories are passed down from generation to generation?

- What do we learn about the importance of First Nations connection to Country through *Tales from the Bush Mob: Willy-willy Wagtail*?
- In the role of Willy Wagtail, write a journal about your visits with Crow.
- Create a Y-Chart and using your senses, brainstorm what you would see, hear and feel once you reach the safety of the other side of the river during the bushfire. Use these ideas to write about this setting.
- Retell the events of *Tales from the Bush Mob: Willy-willy Wagtail* in your own words.
- Create a retelling of one of the three stories by using illustrations, but no words.
- What language is used to show how dangerous the bushfire is?
- Role-play the very first Bush Mob council meeting.
- In pairs or small groups, role-play a scene of your choice from *Tales from the Bush Mob: Willy-willy Wagtail*.
- Discuss the messages of harmony inherent in *Tales from the Bush Mob: Willy-willy Wagtail*.
- Throughout *Tales from the Bush Mob: Willy-willy Wagtail*, the illustrations show concentric circles. What might this represent throughout the book?



APPENDIX – LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

| Year | Curriculum Area |
|----------|---|
| F | English Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify some features of texts including events and characters and retell events from a text (ACELT1578)Retell familiar literary texts through performance, use of illustrations and images (ACELT1580) |
| 1 | English Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none">Discuss how authors create characters using language and images (ACELT1581)Discuss features of plot, character and setting in different types of literature and explore some features of characters in different texts (ACELT1584)Recreate texts imaginatively using drawing, writing, performance and digital forms of communication (ACELT1586)Innovate on familiar texts by using similar characters, repetitive patterns or vocabulary (ACELT1832) |
| 2 | English Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none">Discuss how depictions of characters in print, sound and images reflect the contexts in which they were created (ACELT1587)Discuss the characters and settings of different texts and explore how language is used to present these features in different ways (ACELT1591)Innovate on familiar texts by experimenting with character, setting or plot (ACELT1833) HASS Geography <ul style="list-style-type: none">The ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples maintain special connections to particular Country/Place (ACHASSK049) |
| 3 | English Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none">Discuss how language is used to describe the settings in texts, and explore how the settings shape the events and influence the mood of the narrative (ACELT1599)Create imaginative texts based on characters, settings and events from students' own and other cultures using visual features, for example perspective, distance and angle (ACELT1601) |
| 5 | English Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify aspects of literary texts that convey details or information about particular social, cultural and historical contexts (ACELT1608) HASS Geography <ul style="list-style-type: none">The impact of bushfires or floods on environments and communities, and how people can respond (ACHASSK114) |

