

OUR LANDS

TUBOWGULE

A SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE HISTORY



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TEACHERS RESOURCES

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SYNOPSIS

Tubowgule: A Sydney Opera House History is an illustrated non-fiction text spanning more than 60,000 years of Australia's past. From the ceremonial gathering place of the Gadi people to the site of the Sydney Opera House today, it shares an informative and inclusive history of Tubowgule, now known as Bennelong Point. Originally an important meeting place where Traditional Owners fished, danced, sang and shared knowledge, colonisers claimed it as their own, oblivious to the ancient culture still practised there. In the mid-twentieth century, a design competition for a state-of-the-art performing arts complex was announced, with Jørn Utzon's submission announced as the winning entry. In 1973, Banalung's descendant, Ben Blakeney, officially welcomed visitors to the newly opened Sydney Opera House, a place where song, dance and culture could be shared once more.

With insightful details, intriguing facts and stunning illustrations, *Tubowgule* is the first book in the *Our Lands* series about Australia's most iconic landmarks and the Aboriginal land on which they stand.

THEMES

First Nations Culture – Song, Dance, Knowledge
Gadi People
Dharug Language
First Nations – History
Australia – Colonisation; First Contacts
Sydney Opera House; Jørn Utzon

WRITING STYLE

Tubowgule is a hybrid narrative non-fiction text that shares the history of the Sydney Opera House, including the land on which it stands. Factual and inclusive, it provides readers with the space to make connections between First Nations culture, knowledge and practices and the impacts of colonisation on the Gadi people. It also shares the story of the design and construction of this iconic building. Each spread includes intricate illustrations and callout boxes with additional information expanding upon the retelling of Tubowgule's past, making the text accessible to a range of audiences. An informative summary is also included, providing a useful collation of events. It is suitable for middle and upper primary audiences.

LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

This book and the classroom activities provided below are primarily relevant to the following areas of the Australian Curriculum:

Learning area	Year level
English	Years 3–6
Humanities and Social Sciences	Years 3–5
Design and Technologies	Years 3–6

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

I wrote *Tubowgule* so that my children would have a book and access to knowledge I wish I'd had as a child.

The idea for *Tubowgule* came to me because I started wondering and asking questions about some of the places in Australia that are well-known today but that I didn't know much about. I wanted to know the history before colonisation, because 1788 is not when the history of this continent started. First Nations peoples have been here for over 65,000 years, and Country and place continue to be an integral part of culture. As an Aboriginal person from one side of my family, it felt unfair that so much of what I was taught in school was from a white, Western perspective. Teachings about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures were so limited, and though I learned some things from my own family, even that was limited due to policies that forbade things such as use of language and ceremonial practices, as well as generational trauma.

I didn't know Tubowgule was such an important place well before the Sydney Opera House was built, and it didn't sit right with me when I discovered the rich history that came before, as well as the ongoing significance of the site for Aboriginal people today. There is still so much to learn and still a long way to go in terms of relations with First Nations peoples in Australia. One big step is to acknowledge the history, yes, but also to acknowledge the connection to Country that Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders still have to this day.

There is some wonderful work happening in many Aboriginal communities who are working towards reclaiming that which was deemed lost. I particularly want to thank Corina Norman and Jasmine Seymour for their guidance and language lessons, but also for all the incredible work they do with reclaiming Dharug Dalang (Dharug language). This book is but a small part of what I hope will continue: reclamation of culture, history, language and all that many thought lost, never to be found again. It has all been here, sleeping, ready to be awakened, and I am proud to be a part of it.

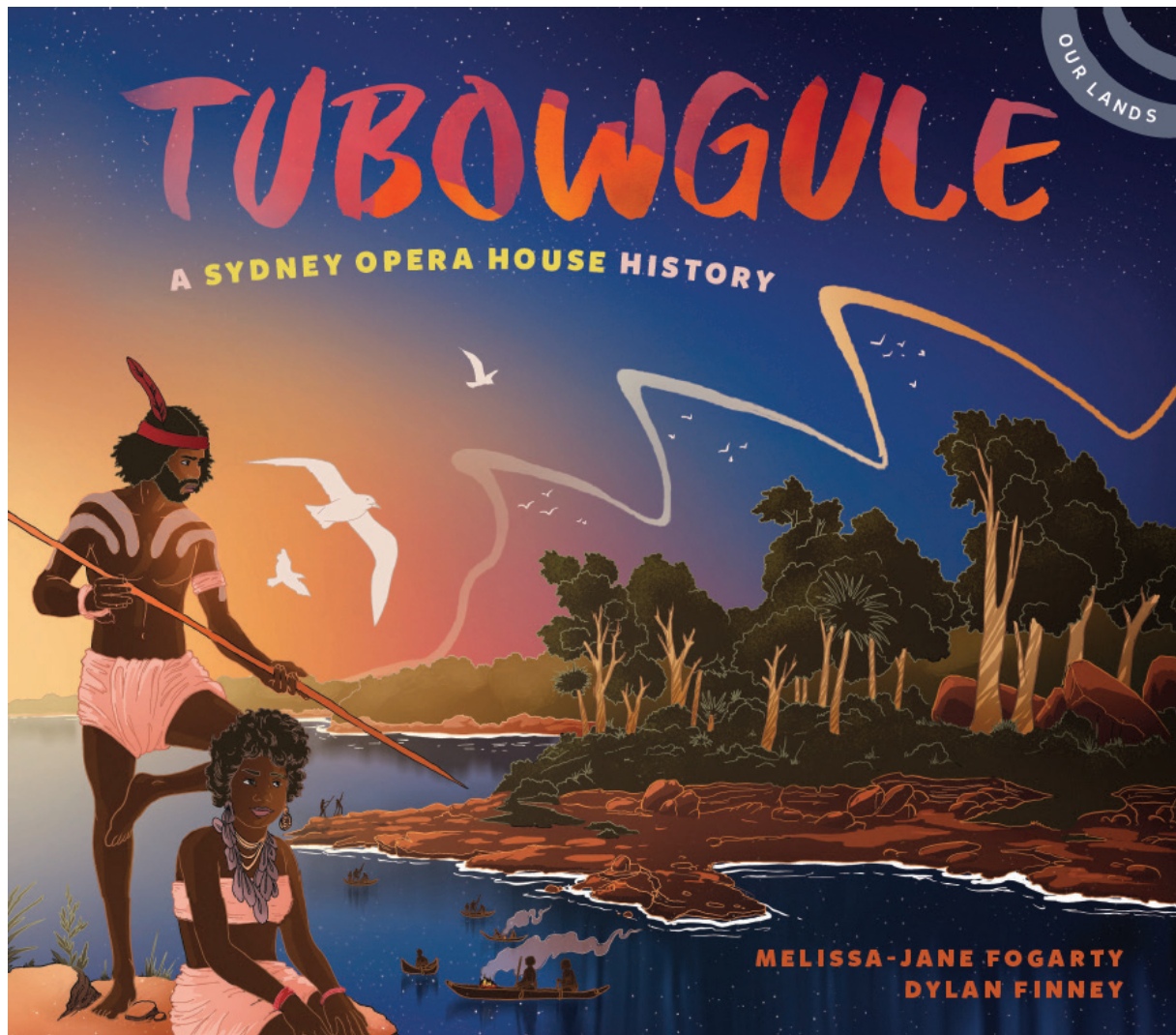
A NOTE FROM THE ILLUSTRATOR

The illustrations in this book were created with the deepest respect for Country and the Gadi People, for whom Tubowgule is a significant Cultural Site and meeting place. I wanted to honour the rich cultural heritage of this land by capturing its beauty and history with vivid colours, textures and dynamic, detailed compositions. I achieved this through use of a variety of brushes and techniques digitally on my iPad. Where soft brushes are used for the sky, water and changing light, pencil and pen brushes add smaller details and textures, with sharper lines creating a strong contrast to define the landscape, architecture and figures. Using multiple styles encourages the reader to consider how elements of Country and Culture endure and remain alongside the features of a modern city.

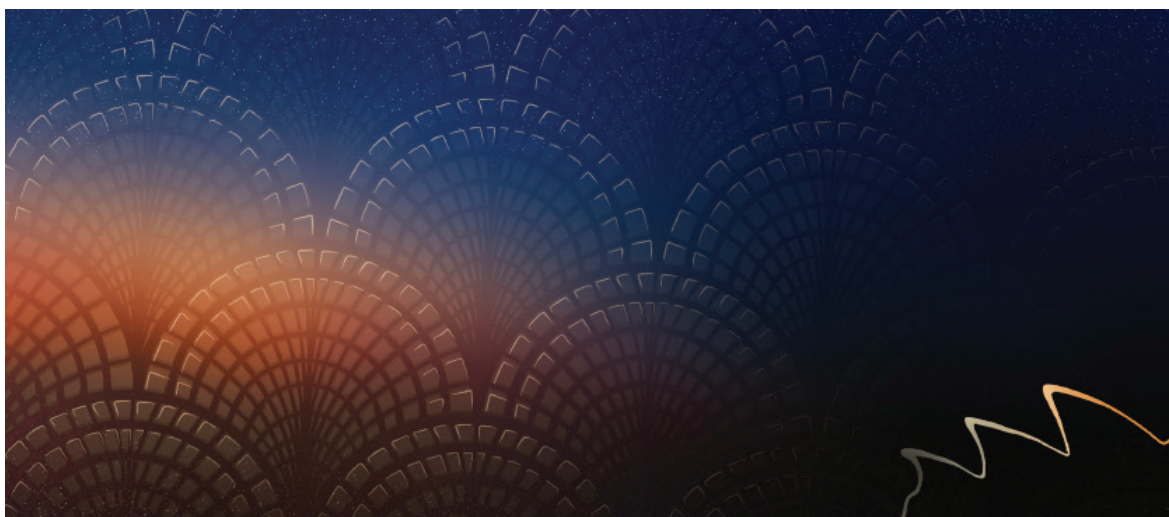
The book takes the reader through the journey of a single day, starting at dawn with the first light of sunrise and ending at dusk as the moon rises. This cycle of light and time reflects the rhythms of the Dreaming, and charts, through visual progression, a story of great change and upheaval faced by First Nations peoples on the land on which the Sydney Opera House now sits, Gadi Country. Ending at dusk, the reader is encouraged to consider the continuity of First Nations people and their significant contributions to Country and Culture by depicting an inverse of the same illustration found at the start of the book.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading *Tubowgule*, look carefully at the front and back cover and endpapers of the book. What do you notice? What are you wondering about this book? Complete a KWL Chart to record your thinking (see below).



- Once you have finished reading *Tubowgule*, return to the endpapers. How does the artwork reflect the concepts in the book? How does it show the continuous link between the Gadi people and Tubowgule, today known as Bennelong Point? How do these images connect with the Sydney Opera House?



- Take note of where you see smoke throughout the book. What is the significance of smoke in First Nations cultures such as that of the Gadi people?
- 'Tubowgule' is a Dharug word meaning 'where the knowledge waters meet'. It was a place where fresh and salt water mixed, providing rich resources and a thriving ecosystem. How did the Gadi people preserve these important resources? What could the colonisers have learnt from the Gadi people, had they been willing?
- With reference to the spread below, discuss the gatherings of the Gadi at Tubowgule. How do such illustrations show the significance of the site to Traditional Owners?



- What does the yellow represent in the illustrations of *Tubowgule*?



- What would you like to say to the colonisers who claimed Tubowgule as their own? What could they have learned from the Gadi people? How could their interactions have been navigated differently?
- As you read *Tubowgule*, observe the icons that accompany each of the callout boxes. What do these icons represent? Use these icons and the notes at the end of the book to construct an annotated timeline of the history of Tubowgule.



- The relationship between Banalung (Bennelong) and Governor Arthur Phillip had a profound effect on both men. Read *The Unlikely Story of Bennelong and Phillip* by Michael Sedunary and Bern Emmerichs (Berbay Publishing) as a companion text to *Tubowgule*. What must it have been like for Banalung to visit England and be so far from Country, family and culture?
- Three constructions built by the Europeans – Banalung’s hut, Fort Macquarie and the Fort Macquarie Tram Shed – were all torn down when no longer useful. Contrast this with the longevity and sustainability of the Gadi people and their culture.
- As you read *Tubowgule*, take note of new and subject-specific vocabulary to add to your class’s Word Wall. Use this vocabulary in your discussions about this text. Examples include:
 - Knowledge; Dharug; Gadi; gather; resources; preservation; colonisers; claim; ceremonies; cattle; middens; slurry; settlements; mortar; lime; Banalung (Bennelong); whimsical; fort; depot; design; tram; controversial; sails; descendant; icon; heritage; performances; dabuwa; garabara; corroborees; Country; Tubowgule; Bennelong Point; First Nations; culture
- Compare the two spreads below. How are they similar and different? What do you notice about the boulders on the point in the first spread? Observe the reflections in the water. What has changed about Tubowgule? What has remained the same?



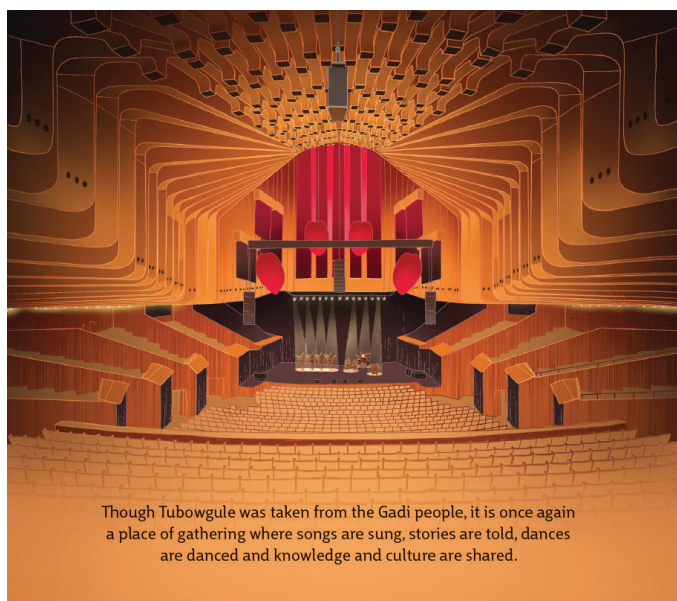
- What impact would filling the channel with rocks have had on Tubowgule?

- Find out more about First Nations artwork and how meeting places are often represented. Discuss the dynamic nature of First Nations symbolism, with different language groups having unique styles and symbols depending on the artwork's context and artist.
<https://www.commonground.org.au/article/communicating-through-art-first-nations-symbols>
- To consider the messages and perspectives shared in *Tubowgule*, choose a spread on which to complete a Project Zero Thinking Routine, such as 'Circle of Viewpoints', 'Step in – Step out – Step Back' or 'I Used to Think, Now I Think'.
<https://pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines>
- Use a graphic organiser such as a Lotus Diagram (see below) to analyse the impact of First Contacts between the Gadi people and European colonisers.
- Visit the following websites to find out more about the Gadi people and their culture:
<https://australian.museum/about/history/exhibitions/gadi/>
<https://www.botanicgardens.org.au/discover-and-learn/horticulture-and-history/you-are-cadi-traditional-lands-gadigal#taking-time-to-reflect>
- Using the following websites, take notes about Tubowgule and the Sydney Opera House. Compare and evaluate the information shared in both sources.
<https://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/our-story/tubowgule>
<http://theoperahouseproject.com/#!/transcripts/Cathy-Craigie-essay>
- How are the sails of the Opera House represented differently throughout *Tubowgule*?
- Using the template below, retell the story of *Tubowgule*.

First	Next	Then	Finally

- Design a new performing arts complex for your school, labelling its features and outlining how this space will be used to inclusively share song, dance, music and culture.
- Which is your favourite spread of *Tubowgule*? Why is this your favourite? Share with a friend.
- Create an infographic to share your understanding of the history of the Sydney Opera House.
- In the voice of Governor Arthur Phillip, write a letter to Banalung upon his return to Australia.
- When Queen Elizabeth II opened the Sydney Opera House, she said: 'The human spirit must sometimes take wings or sails and create something that is not just utilitarian or commonplace.' What did she mean? How is this true of the Sydney Opera House?
- Read *Jørn's Magnificent Imagination* by Coral Vass and Nicky Johnston (Exisle Publishing) as a companion text to *Tubowgule*. What inspires you about Jørn Utzon's story?
- Based on the information given on the final spread, use Canva or a similar app to design an infographic sharing the history of Tubowgule.
- Have you ever visited the Sydney Opera House? If so, what do you recollect about your visit? Look at images of the modern-day site (e.g. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sydney-Opera-House>). Use these images to make comparisons between the changes this site has witnessed over the past 60,000 years.

- How do the illustrations below reflect the central place First Nations culture has to the Sydney Opera House and its surrounds?



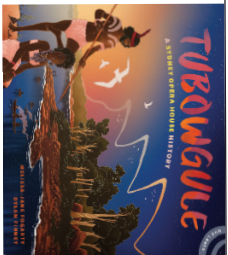
Though Tubowgule was taken from the Gadi people, it is once again a place of gathering where songs are sung, stories are told, dances are danced and knowledge and culture are shared.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **performances** are an important feature at the Opera House today, along with all kinds of events including comedy shows, ballet performances, musical acts and more, showcasing entertainers from all around the world.

- What is the significance of Banalung's descendant, Ben Blakeney, being the one to officially welcome visitors to the House? How does the spread below show the positive and collective spirit of this place?





K

What do you already **know** about the Sydney Opera House?

W

What do you **want** to learn more about?

L

What did you **learn** about the Sydney Opera House from reading *Tubowgule*?

Lotus Diagram

[illegible]