

# Teachers' Notes by Fran Knight

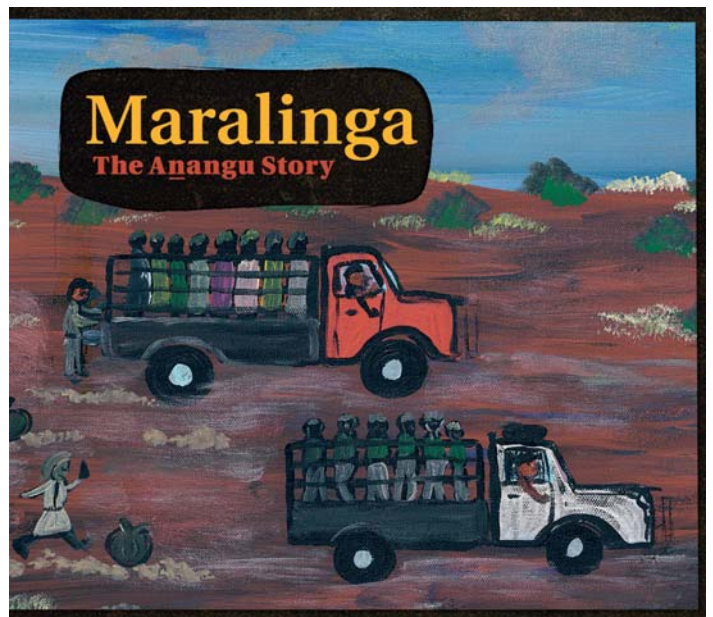
## Maralinga: The Anangu Story

by  
Yalata and Oak Valley communities,  
with Christobel Mattingley

ISBN 978 1 74175 621 0  
Recommended for ages 10-14+ yrs

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## INTRODUCTION

This is the moving story of the plight of the Oak Valley and Yalata Communities, as they survived invasion by European explorers and then settlers who brought the railway, followed by institutionalisation by missionaries and government officials bringing Christianity and rations. It is told with compassion by members of the communities with noted Adelaide author, Christobel Mattingley. But in the 1950's the greatest imposition of all occurred, when the land, looked after and revered by countless generations of people, was deemed worthless enough for a series of atomic bomb tests.

The immediate impact of this government decision was to remove the people from their land. Those who did not know what was happening were sought by officials but many avoided contact with these people, and consequently many Aboriginal people still living within the test site were affected by the tests.

A greater burden was still to be imposed when the land was simply left and entry was barred to all once the tests were abandoned. The Anangu were heartbroken at the loss of their land and as more stories were told of the affect of these tests on individuals and the community, so the issue of cleaning up the land came to the fore. It took many dogged years of lobbying for the people to receive any recognition that they needed help with this mammoth task.

This story reflects the attitudes towards Aboriginal people in the middle of the twentieth century by government officials. The climax, the eventual granting of land rights over this area of land, was a fitting end to a sorrowful part of Australia's history. The book as a whole is a salutary reminder that people's rights are not to be tampered with. The story of the Anangu and their survival despite years of dispossession and alienation is one to be told and retold, making the wider community proud of their persistence.

## USING THE BOOK IN THE CLASSROOM

This set of notes aims to give students an overall sense of what happened at Maralinga in the 1950's, what happened to the Aboriginal communities that lived there and what is happening today. The notes are not presented along subject lines, but are presented as a theme study and include suggested resources, activities and worksheets. The class could be studying Aboriginal culture or atomic testing or dispossession of an Indigenous community or Aboriginal people in today's Australia or land rights. Or the class could be reading novels about people affected by bombs, and so use this book to compare stories. The use of this book as part of a class study is endless.

## CONTEXT – BEFORE READING THE BOOK

Before you start, collect together:

- a set of atlases or set up *Google Earth* on your electronic white board or computers;
- a number of copies of **Maralinga: The Anangu Story** (Yalata and Oak Valley Community with Christobel Mattingley) ready for student use;
- a set of maps of Australia, South Australia and the Western Desert;
- a large wall map of Australia;
- spare white paper, coloured pencils, photos of the desert regions of South Australia;
- books about bush tucker and Australian animals from your library;
- books from your library concerning Hiroshima and stories of children in war (see list below);
- ***Going for Kalta*** (Yvonne Edwards), ***Survival in our own Land*** (Christobel Mattingley and Ken Hampton) and ***Ngadjuri, the Aboriginal Peoples from the Mid North of South Australia*** (Knight, et al) and other books about Aboriginal people in South Australia produced by the Education Department of South Australia from your library, and have them available in your room (see bibliography);
- have some quotes about Maralinga displayed in large print around your room. Examples include:

- o *Maralinga - our own shame*  
– Jim Green
- o *We have made a successful start. When the [nuclear] tests are completed, as they soon will be, we shall be in the same position as the United States or Soviet Russia. We shall have made and tested the massive weapons. It will be possible then to discuss on equal terms.*  
– Harold Macmillan, U.K. Prime Minister, 1957
- o *Soldiers everywhere. Guns. We all cry, cry, cryin'. Men, women and children, all afraid.*  
- Tjarutja woman Alice Cox
- o When Maralinga was first proposed for atomic weapons testing, chief scientist Sir William Penney described it as *a first-class site* that would present the British with *no difficulty in testing 20 or more weapons*. His colleague in the Commonwealth Ministry of Supply, A.S. Butement, agreed: *There is no need whatever for Aborigines to use any part of this country around the proposed area.*
- o *We can shut the book on it, but in a way that is very positive for the future in the way that we have worked together with the Aboriginal people to clean up this area and rehabilitate it, not just to say sorry, but you know, sorry it happened but we'll walk away.*  
– Senator Nick Minchin

## A. INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

### SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT

(This outline could be used for any study of an Aboriginal cultural group.)

**AIM:** *to have all students develop some empathy with a group of people who have been invaded and their culture devalued. To have students have some certainty about the area under discussion*

1. Check out the Dispossession activity and have that ready for students to re-enact. The activity can be found in the activity section of any of the Aboriginal books (*Kurna, Adnyamathanha* and *Ngarrindjeri*) published by the Education Department of South Australia and *Ngadjuri* (published by SASOSE) A list is included in the bibliography below. This activity causes students to stand a little outside themselves and see a little of what it means to have your culture destroyed.
2. Using the large maps of South Australia, pinpoint the area being discussed. Ask the students to make generalisations about the area (eg. climate, weather, topography, flora and fauna, water, people, European impact, industrial sites).
3. On the electronic white board look at this website with your students <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maralinga> (Wikipedia about Maralinga).
4. If Maralinga is used as a key word search, then many sites appear: ask students in groups of 2 or 3 to check out one of the websites and see what it is about; assess its usefulness to the class. Report back to the class.
5. Find out the meaning of the word *Maralinga*. Set several students to do this and bring their results back to the class.
6. Bring the students back to the electronic white board and collate what they have found under these headings:
  - o Maralinga – Physical Geography/Environment
  - o Maralinga – Aboriginal Communities
  - o Maralinga – Bomb site

Briefly discuss the reasons behind the differences in the websites and what information is available. Lead the students to see that most web space is taken up with political debate rather than information about the people.

7. Recall the students to the maps discussed at the start of this activity.
  - a. Look at the map on page 68 of the book, *Maralinga: The Anangu Story*

- b. On their own map, mark out the places that make up the Anangu territory.
  - c. Place the settlements which make up Anangu lands on the map.
  - d. Use the distance scale to work out how far this community is from major Australian cities (particularly Canberra).
8. Use the map/s to draw attention to the physical geography of the region. What do the maps tell you about climate, weather, topography, water sources? What flora and fauna are there? What modern services and facilities can be found?
- o Ask the students to imagine what an Anangu map would be like. How different is this from a European map?

## B. THE LAND

### SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT

(This could be adapted for any study of an Aboriginal group.)

**AIM:** to see the land through story, and compare Aboriginal and European mapping methods.

The story of Maralinga starts with stories of the land. Read them with your students (pp. 1-5). What do these stories show about the people and their land?

- Aboriginal stories have three main components: rules about the environment, people, and spirituality. Look for these rules in each of the stories.
- Can the stories be mapped? Discuss this with your class. These stories are told by an elder to a small group of younger Aboriginal children. How would the elder show the children where he is talking about? Small groups in your class may like to practice telling the stories
- Can other stories from this area be found? Check out some of the collections of Aboriginal stories. Ask your teacher librarian for help. Remind your students that many books of Aboriginal stories were not authenticated and so are not to be used. Check in the blurb, introduction and title page to see if there is Aboriginal input and ownership of the stories in the book. Share what can be found.
- What about their environment is important to these people?
- Have small groups in the class take one small area of Anangu lands. They are to make a king size map of the area, with soaks, water holes, springs, hills, wooded areas, roads, swamps etc placed on it. Some of these things they will find through map work at the start, but some will be given through the stories.
- Using *Google Earth* gives some idea of the topography and ground cover of the area. Some groups may like to do a three dimensional map, diorama or sand tray.

## C. DISPOSSESSION

### SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT

**AIM:** to understand the wider story of Aboriginal dispossession through the particular study of the Anangu and understand the consequent changes in the lives of the Anangu people.

Aboriginal people here, like many others all over Australia, first met European invaders through the explorers. Initially the Aboriginal people were wary, but many showed the explorers water holes and helped them on their way. Many explorers would have died without Aboriginal help. The explorers were followed by settlers who took the land for their own purposes.

- Ask the class to find examples of explorers needing Anangu help (p 11-15)
- Check these websites with your class to add to their information  
<http://www.samemory.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=407>  
<http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/explorers/> (Eyre)
- What were the results for the Anangu people of the explorers' visits?
- How long did it take for others to follow the explorers?

- Draw a timeline to reflect the early invasion of the land, showing the impact each successive wave of new arrivals had on the population
- By 1950, life for the Anangu people had changed dramatically.
- Chart these changes with the class. How different was life for an Anangu child?
- List all the qualities of life on the electronic whiteboard, food, water, social activities, shelter, clothing, etc, and ask the class to catalogue the changes. On the left hand side list those needs and how they were met before invasion, and on the right hand side, list the changes made in their lifestyle (your work may look like this)

Quality of life	Before invasion	After invasion
Water	Water was collected from a soak or spring	Water was trucked in, as the soaks were overused by the trains
Food		
etc		

- How might the older people have viewed these changes?
- Ask the class to draw and write a postcard from an Anangu child living at Ooldea in 1950 to a relative in Adelaide. The picture will show one aspect of their life, and the message will reflect what their life is like. If the class were also to make a postcard from an older man or woman, how different would it be?

## D. THE BOMB TESTS

### SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT

**AIM:** to place the Maralinga bomb tests in an international context and critically evaluate primary and secondary sources.

1. Remind your students of the quotes you have around the classroom. Read them out loud. Ask the students what they might mean. Lead them to note the difference between European and Anangu quotes. Can the students add any more relevant quotes from their reading?
2. When reading the section of the book about the bomb tests, compile a time-line of events. Ask several of your students to write up an A4 sheet of paper, with the date at the top, and a summary of what happened in that year. At the end of the session have these pieces of paper put in order on a display board. Ask some of the students to find out what was happening in the rest of the world at that time. (Cold War, Berlin Wall, Cuba Crisis etc.) Why is this important?
3. Refer back to the Wikipedia site about Maralinga:  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maralinga> (Wikipedia about Maralinga)  
Ask students to select from the Wikipedia article information about the bomb tests which will add to their time-line
4. <http://www.sea-us.org.au/thunder/britsbombingus.html> (a site about the Maralinga tests)  
The above site is one of the main sites that deal with the tests. Ask students to browse the site and see if they can work out what perspective the author is taking. Why do they think this?
5. Have the students read and search out the pages of the book about the bomb tests and the fall out (pp. 36-45) Ask them to take particular note of the changes in what the paintings are about and how they are executed. Get the class to take note of the photos included in that section.
6. While reading and discussing, list the effects of the bomb tests.

## E. CONSEQUENCES OF THE BOMB TESTS

### SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT

**AIM:** *To understand the consequences for the Anangu people of having their land contaminated. To understand the activist and legal process of the clean-up campaign and locate it in the story of Aboriginal land rights in Australia.*

The call to clean up the test site was supported with a Royal Commission. Many Anangu people gave evidence at this commission.

- Do a timeline of the years taken between the tests and the final clean up.
- Living at Yalata had some major problems for the Anangu people. Have your class imagine what these problems might be. How did the people try to overcome some of these problems? (p. 48-53)
- Have volunteers from the class prepare an oral presentation, where they take the role of the people who gave evidence (p. 44-45) and present their story to the commission.
- How did the discussion for land rights over the Maralinga area occur? (p. 58-59)
- Land rights are a big issue in Australia. When was the land rights legislation passed through Federal Parliament? Lead your class to see that this handing back of land to the Anangu people **preceded** what was happening in the rest of Australia.
- Have your class summarise the arguments for land rights.
- Locate on the maps where the Anangu people live today.

## F. ART AND THE ILLUSTRATIONS

### THE ARTS

**AIM:** *to have students develop an understanding of Aboriginal art through a study of that produced by a range of Anangu people*

- Two styles of painting are used. One is the more traditional style of painting called symbolic, in which things are shown using a symbol. An example is this can be seen in the last page in the book containing the map and glossary. The black marks are symbolic of an animal's tracks, and people readily understand the painting is about that animal and where it has been.
- The other style is representative, a European style of painting which shows things as they are. An example of this is on pages 58 and 59, where a tree is drawn with a bird in it, with hills in the background.
- The style usually used by Aboriginal people is the symbolic style and this is often seen as a series of dots, while the representative painting has broad strokes of paint.
- Take note too of the colours used by the painters. Can your students note any more significant traits?
- With your class, look closely at the two styles of painting. Make sure that your class can articulate the difference between the two styles. Ask them to paint a scene from the book using one of the two styles.
- Put your class into groups of 2 or 3 students. Each group is to look closely at 2 of the paintings, noting all the features that they can. They will report back to the class about the paintings they have chosen.
- Some students may like to look more closely the photographs. Ask them to evaluate the photos on criteria such as colour, use of space, theme, the story of the photo, what the photo shows of the landscape, what the photo adds to the book. As with the art work, the group is to report back to the class.

## G. LIFE STORIES

### ENGLISH AND HISTORY

**AIM:** *to have students understand that biographies and autobiographies can tell us more than that read in a history book or government report*

Throughout the book, Anangu people tell the readers their stories of their lives and how the bombing affected them and their families. Names like Yvonne Edwards, Yami Lester, Stanley Minning, Alice Cox, Jack Baker and others appear often as they tell their parts of the story.

Ask your students to research and gather information to produce a biographical report about one of these people. Several students may choose Yami Lester, for example. The students will need to skim-read the book looking for references to Yami and places where his words are quoted. In collecting his words the students will be able to put together an outline of his life. The students could use a time-line approach or write the work as a diary or report.

There are references to several European people who assisted the Anangu people. Students may like to report on one of them in the same way.

## H. LITERATURE CIRCLE ABOUT HIROSHIMA AND OTHER BOMB SITES

### ENGLISH

**AIM:** *to have students read about the bomb tests from a different perspective*

Set up a Literature Circle to enable students to read of another bomb site and its effects through a novel and picture book.

- Have 6 or so copies of 6 of the books.
- Show and tell the books to your class
- Have the class in groups of 4-6 and ask each group to select one of the books
- Each group must undertake to read the book
- They can do this by reading in a circle, having people read one at a time, reading for homework, having one or two read each week and so on
- Set aside a lesson a week for this activity and make sure they all read for homework
- In this way a novel can be read in half a term
- At the end of the reading time, have one member of each group report back to the class (story of the novel, what they learnt about children in war, what they learnt about atomic bombs and their effects)

You may like to give the students a proforma to fill out as they read. **See BLM 1 on p. 10.**

### LITERATURE CIRCLE BOOK LIST

Briggs, Raymond (1988) *When the wind blows*, Penguin 978 014 009419 0  
(an older book which has been republished many times)

Bruchner, Karl (1961) *The day of the bomb*, Van Nostrand 978 044 201150 5  
(an older book which has been republished many times)

Catran, Wendy (2004) *The swap*, Lothian 978 0 7344 0654 5

Coerr, Eleanor (2002) *Sadako and the thousand paper cranes*, Hodder 978 0 7336 1732 4  
(there are many versions of this book)

Hershey, John (2002) *Hiroshima*, Penguin 9780141184371  
(first published in 1946 and often reprinted)

Lawrence, Louise (2002) *Children of the dust*, Random House 9780099433422

Levine, Karen (2003) *Hana's suitcase*, Allen and Unwin 9781741141672

Mattingley, Christobel (1985) *The Miracle Tree*, Hodder & Stoughton Aust 9780340376041

Meehan, Kieren (2003) *Night singing*, Penguin 978 0 14 330060 1

Morimoto, Junko (1995) *My Hiroshima*, Harper Collins 0207188734

Tames, Richard (2006) *Hiroshima: The shadow of the bomb*, Oxford 978 0 431 07706 2

Tucker, Alan (2009) *Atomic Testing*, Scholastic 978 1 74169 217 4

## I. GENERAL ACTIVITIES

**Aim:** to provide extension work for students

- Imagine you are a journalist for the Adelaide *Advertiser* (or other national paper), sent to report on the bomb tests in the 1950's. Think about what you might see and hear. Think about the point of view you will take with your writing. Write a feature article for the paper, giving a view of the test you have observed. (500 words)
- Imagine the British Government wants to carry out a series of bomb tests in outback Australia today. What arguments would you use to respond to this request? (500 words)
- Create a dot painting of the Maralinga story.
- Write a letter to the Royal Commission stating why you think the land should be cleaned up.
- Present an argument to the South Australian Government outlining why the Anangu people need to return to Maralinga.
- Write a story of the Anangu people incorporating the bomb tests.
- Imagine that you have found a series of letters written from the test site to a friend, by one of the observers opposed to the tests. Write up several of these letters showing the point of view of the observer.
- Language is a most important part of Aboriginal culture, and sadly many languages have been lost since European invasion. Throughout this book are many instances of Anangu language, and the glossary at the end of the book underlines the language used. List the words used. Divide them into groups (food, animals, people etc). See if you can find any more words.
  - Practice saying the words using the pronunciation guide.
- <http://www.teachinginsa.sa.edu.au/aboriginallands/pages/lifestyle/aboriginallands/?reFlag=1> (This website of the Education Department of SA lists the APY Lands, of which the Anangu lands are part. It lists the schools in this vast area west of Adelaide. Map the schools in the area) Add these places to your map. How would you support the families of those children who come to Adelaide for their high school education?
- Debate the topic: The Maralinga tests were useful.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Aboriginal Voices* (2000) Department of Education, Training and Employment, Adelaide  
0 7308 5742 5

*The Adnyamathanha People: The Aboriginal people of the Northern Flinders Ranges* (1992)  
Education Department of South Australia

*The Kurna People: Aboriginal People of the Adelaide Plains* (1989) Education Department of South Australia

*Ngadjuri: Aboriginal People of the Mid North Region of South Australia* (2005) SASOSE Council Inc, South Australia

Mattingley, Christobel & Ken Hampton (1988) *Survival in Our Own Land: 'Aboriginal' experiences in 'South Australia' since 1836/told by Nungas and others*, Wakefield Press

Tunbridge, Dorothy (1988) *Flinders Ranges Dreaming*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies



BLM 1

LITERATURE CIRCLE DISCUSSION NOTES

<b>Group members:</b>		
<b>Novel we read:</b>		<b>Author:</b>
<b>Story line:</b>		
<b>Setting:</b>		
<b>Characters:</b>		
<b>What we learnt about bombs:</b>		

# YALATA NEWS

February – June 2008

Edited by Jonny Hedt  
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**FIRST VOTE:** Children's author Christobel Mattingley and editor Susannah Chambers show students a draft of a new book telling the story of Anangu and Maralinga. Students voted for their favourite cover.

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK FOR BOOK

During the April Yalata Festival everyone had the chance to be involved in the work on this important book.

*MARALINGA – THE ANANGU STORY* tells how Anangu had to leave Ooldea and traditional country in 1952 because of the British atomic bomb testing. Community Chairperson Mima Smart and others have already been working with writer Christobel Mattingley telling stories and painting.

Christobel came with the publisher's editor, Susannah Chambers, illustrator Craig Smith

and photographer Tom Stringer to share progress with the community.

Children at the school voted on their favourite cover design and worked with Christobel, Susannah and Craig writing and drawing pictures, some to be included in the book. Alistair's class did some very good work.

Everyone who gathered at the school on Saturday was shown page layouts with text, photos and illustrations, and asked which cover design they liked best. Christobel read the whole text

aloud and asked for comments. Everyone was very glad their story is being told in such a beautiful book.

Christobel and her team also visited Oak Valley and were taken to Ooldea Soak by Bob Sim with Mr Minning and children.

A book like this takes years to produce. Christobel and her team hope to return to Yalata later in 2008 to show its progress. Plans are underway to celebrate its launch in Adelaide and on the Lands when it is published in April 2009.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

### YALATA AND OAK VALLEY COMMUNITIES

Mima Smart writes: 'Last year Alice Cox, Margaret May, Pansy Woods, Mabel Queama, Marjorie Sandimar, Yvonne Edwards, Mima Smart, Janet May worked as storytellers or translators with Christobel Mattingley to tell the story of what happened at Maralinga. Our story is a very important story that needs to be heard by children and adults across our country. Christobel has added a lot of other stories and information to make a very strong story. We have continued working on the book this year and have just finished another workshop to draw pictures that help tell our story. Dora Queama, Hilda Moodoo, Audra Bridley and Noelene Bridley have helped some of the older ladies to do the paintings.'

### CHRISTOBEL MATTINGLEY

I was born at Brighton, South Australia on 26 October 1931. Over 50 years later when I was researching and writing the Aboriginal history of South Australia, *Survival in Our Own Land*, I discovered I was born near and spent my first 8 years on the Tjilbruke Dreaming Trail, one of the important sites of the Kurna people, custodians of what we now call the Adelaide Plains. But in my childhood Aboriginal people were never seen or spoken about. They were kept on reserves away from the cities. The first time I saw Aboriginal people was after we went to live in Sydney and we saw a group at La Perouse at Botany Bay where there was a reserve. I have never forgotten how sad they looked and nobody explained to me the reason. My father was building the first road bridge across the Hawkesbury River north of Sydney, and on the sandstone cliffs there were some beautiful rock carvings of fish and stingrays. I used to sit in a little cave in the golden stone looking out over the wide river, imagining what it must have been like to be Aboriginal.

My imagination was fed by the books I read – *Children of the Dark People* by Frank Dalby Davison and *The Little Black Princess* by Mrs Aeneas Gunn, and my curiosity was met by the books about Aboriginal culture I bought with my carefully saved pocket money at the Australian Museum in school holidays. A slim volume of Aboriginal words and place names with their meanings was one of my favourite bedtime books, and the euphonious names of the Sydney suburbs through which I travelled to school, and those which the headmistress read out the end of the each term with the boarders' travelling arrangements, were a litany which always ran through my mind.

In 1975 when I was asked by the Australia Council to tour outback and remote communities in Queensland, I went through some soul searching wondering what my white middle class books had to offer Aboriginal children in the reserves I was to visit. I found Aboriginal people to be very good listeners. But I was shocked and angry at the white bureaucracy and lifestyle imposed upon them, so I enrolled in a course of Aboriginal Studies at Underdale CAE in Adelaide. On subsequent lecture tours arranged by NT and WA Arts Councils I visited a number of Aboriginal communities by invitation, and wrote the children's picture book, *Tucker's Mob*, set in the Bamyili, now renamed Barrunga, community near Katherine, NT.

Being a librarian by profession I had noticed that the only materials in Aboriginal schools relevant to those communities were the roneoed booklets prepared by teachers, and I wanted Aboriginal children to have a *proper* book in which they featured in a situation to which they could relate. With the cooperation of the publisher, Jane Covernton at Omnibus Books, and the SA Aboriginal Education Unit, *Tucker's Mob* was translated into 4 South Australian Aboriginal languages – Kurna, Narrunga, Pitjantjara and Yankunytjatjara. At the launch of the book in Adelaide a Kurna elder said, "I've waited all my life for a book like this."

Ancient Aboriginal rock carvings on the north coast of Tasmania led me to write *Daniel's Secret*, showing how they aroused a European child's awareness of the first peoples' occupation. In *Chelonia Green, Champion of Turtles* I also refer to the prior Aboriginal presence on the Queensland island where the story is set.

## **ABOUT THE WRITER OF THESE NOTES**

### **FRAN KNIGHT**

Fran is a semi-retired teacher librarian who loves to read adolescent fiction. She has read and reviewed children's books since the 1970's, for magazines such as *Magpies* and *Fiction Focus*, as well as newsletters for English teachers, history teachers and teacher librarians around Australia. Her love of reading has led her to talk at conferences about her reading and enthusing kids to read. She has written teacher notes for many books published in Australia, and her articles about using books in the classroom are often found in *The Literature Base*, and sometimes in *Magpies*, *ACCESS* and *Viewpoint*.

In 2005, her book, *Ngadjuri: Aboriginal people of the Mid North Region of South Australia* was published, following 20 years of research into this group. Pledger Consulting has published nine books which reflect Fran's reading. Each of the nine contains lists of books she has read, placed under subject headings which are used in schools to help students find novels that reflect their interests.

Now living in the City of Adelaide, where a short walk takes her to a range of libraries and bookshops, Fran continues to answer queries about what books to give students; talks to students about good books to read; writes teacher notes, articles and reviews; and reads.

Fran's contribution to teacher librarianship has been recognised with the South Australian Teacher Librarian of the Year awarded in 2005, and Honorary Life Membership of SLASA (School Library Association of South Australia) in 2007.