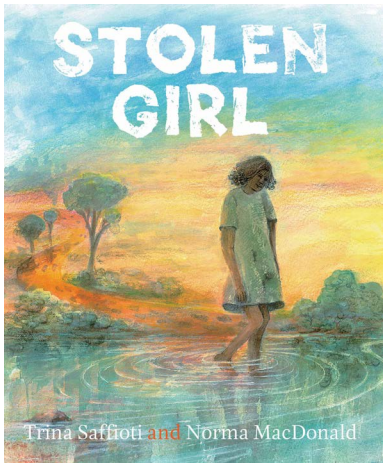
Magabala Books • Teacher Notes



Stolen Girl

Written by Trina Saffioti
Illustrated by Norma MacDonald

Teacher Notes prepared by Christina Wheeler

OVERVIEW

Stolen Girl is a fictionalised account of the Stolen Generation. This picture book for young readers tells the story of an Aboriginal girl taken from her family and sent to a children's home. Through the combination of beautiful mixed media illustrations by artist Norma MacDonald and a sensitive yet uncomplicated text by Trina Saffroti, readers are given an insight into the life of a child who has been displaced into a world void of love, family and culture. The book concludes with a sense of hope as the girl takes her first steps towards home.

THEMES

- Stolen Generation
- Aboriginal culture
- Loss
- Family

AUDIENCE AND WRITING STYLE

Suitable for middle primary students, *Stolen Girl* is a narrative told in the third person. It is written in a combination of past and present tense. The narration promotes compassion and empathy. It conveys the theme of the Stolen Generation in a way that allows readers to form their own opinions and judgements.

LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

This book and the classroom activities provided are primarily relevant to **English** and **Humanities** and **Social Sciences** for year levels 2–4. The appendix highlights relevant content descriptions, cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities.

CULTURAL NOTES

Stolen Girl explores complex themes relating to the Stolen Generation that some Indigenous and non-Indigenous students may find confronting or distressing. Teachers may find it useful to read Teaching Indigenous content with Magabala Books. To further explore issues related to the Stolen Generation use the following links:

http://www.australianstogether.org.au/stories/detail/the-stolen-generations

http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/politics/a-guide-to-australias-stolen-generations#axzz3uZ4sym2M

http://stolengenerationstestimonies.com/index.php

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

Trina Saffioti lives in Wellington, New Zealand. She is descended from the Gugu Yulangi people of Far North Queensland. Trina has an interest in children's books and is influenced by stories that her mother and grandmother told her when she was growing up. Trina's first book, *The Old Frangipani Tree at Flying Fish Point* was published in 2008.

Norma MacDonald is descended from Yamitji people of the Gascoyne region and the Nyungar people of the South West of Western Australia. One of Australia's leading artists, her work is held in collections throughout Australia and overseas.

CLASSROOM IDEAS

Before reading

- Discuss the front cover and title of the book.
  - Describe the body language of the girl on the front cover.
  - Who is she? How old might she be? Where is she?
  - What does the title suggest this book may be about?
- Discuss the Stolen Generation as a class.
  - When did this occur? Who did it affect? Why did this occur?
  - What effects may this have had on children taken from their families and on parents whose children were taken from them?
  - Watch Kevin Rudd's apology speech. Why was the Prime Minister's apology an important step towards reconciliation?
- Read the preamble of *Stolen Girl* – 'About the Stolen Generation'.
  - What is meant by terms such as 'full blood', 'assimilation' and 'integration'?
  - Discuss the reasoning behind the government policy that led to the Stolen Generation. Use De Bono's Six Thinking Hats to assess the government policy.
- Have you ever been separated from your family? You may have become lost or had to stay with friends or relatives. Brainstorm words to describe how you felt.

After reading

- Compare the first two double-page spreads in the story, especially the way in which the illustrations depict the very different experiences of eating breakfast. Discuss how these two illustrations symbolise very simply the differences between being with family and being at the children's home.
- Using watercolour pencils, if possible, draw a picture to illustrate one of your favourite things to do with your family. Write a journal piece to accompany your picture.
- What story is being told in this illustration? Examine other examples of Indigenous art that tell stories.

- The girl's mother teaches her essential life skills. What are these skills? What important life skills have your parents taught you? Discuss the importance of the relationship between parents and their children.
- Have you ever listened to stories from the 'old days' from your elders such as grandparents? How important are these stories to your identity? Discuss the notion of ancestry and identity. Trace your own family tree.

- Look carefully at the page opening in which the uniformed man takes the girl away.

The reader sees the life of the Aboriginal girl from two different perspectives. In the foreground of this illustration are things that may have seemed important to white people of the time such as the fact she is not wearing shoes. In the back- ground are things important to the girl — her country, her home.

  - Re-read the text on this page. Discuss the significance of these words as she is taken away from her mother. Do you think that the government perhaps did try to 'forget' that she was there by taking her away?
  - Imagine you are this girl. What might be going through your mind at this point in the text?
- Discuss the ways in which the girl's identity has been taken away.
  - The reader never learns her name. Why do you think this is?
  - The dress she is wearing is taken away; her clothes are replaced.
  - She gets into trouble for using her native language.
- What does the girl do to try to hold onto her Indigenous culture and to remember her mother?
- Draw a rectangle with a diagonal line. On one side, write nouns, adjectives and verbs to describe the girl's home. On the other side, write words to describe life at the children's home.
- The final page opening offers a sense of hope as the girl decides to leave. Look carefully at the illustration. What stands out in this picture? What does the key symbolise?

- Compare the use of colour throughout the book. How has the illustrator used colour to convey meaning?
- Read extracts from people of the Stolen Generation, which are readily available online or from books such as *Rabbit Proof Fence*.

APPENDIX – LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM F-10 (VERSION 8)

Year	English	Humanities and Social Sciences
2	Understand that different types of texts have identifiable text structures and language features that help the text serve its purpose (ACELA1463) Identify visual representations of characters' actions, reactions, speech and thought processes in narratives, and consider how these images add to or contradict or multiply the meaning of accompanying words (ACELA1469) Discuss how depictions of characters in print, sound and images reflect the contexts in which they were created (ACELT1587) Compare opinions about characters, events and settings in and between texts (ACELT1589) Discuss the characters and settings of different texts and explore how language is used to present these features in different ways (ACELT1591) Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning and begin to analyse texts by drawing on growing knowledge of context, language and visual features and print and multimodal text structures (ACELY1670)	**Geography** The ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples maintain special connections to particular Country/Place (ACHASSK049)
3	Identify the effect on audiences of techniques, for example shot size, vertical camera angle and layout in picture books, advertisements and film segments (ACELA1483) Discuss texts in which characters, events and settings are portrayed in different ways, and speculate on the authors' reasons (ACELT1594) Draw connections between personal experiences and the worlds of texts, and share responses with others (ACELT1596) 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) Identify the point of view in a text and suggest alternative points of view (ACELY1675)	**History** The importance of Country/Place to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples who belong to a local area (ACHASSK062)
4	Explore the effect of choices when framing an image, placement of elements in the image, and salience on composition of still and moving images in a range of types of texts (ACELA1496) Make connections between the ways different authors may represent similar storylines, ideas and relationships (ACELT1602) Discuss literary experiences with others, sharing responses and expressing a point of view (ACELT1603) Discuss how authors and illustrators make stories exciting, moving and absorbing and hold readers' interest by using various techniques, for example character development and plot tension (ACELT1605) Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning to expand content knowledge, integrating and linking ideas and analysing and evaluating texts (ACELY1692)	**History** The diversity of Australia's first peoples and the long and continuous connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to Country/Place (land, sea, waterways and skies) (ACHASSK083)
Cross curriculum priorities Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures		
General capabilities Literacy, Ethical understanding, Intercultural understanding		