

Common Wealth

By Gregg Dreise

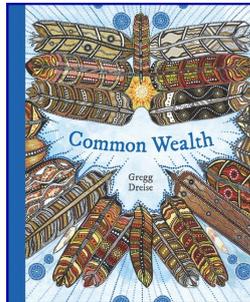
Publisher: Scholastic

ISBN 9781760975166 SCIS: 5358294

\$24.99

All that I'm wishing, is that you take a moment to listen... A slam poetry persuasive and powerful vision of unity from award-winning First Nations creator Gregg Dreise. Passionate, yet peaceful, *Common Wealth* is a compelling plea for a future of truth, togetherness and respect for our nation's deep history.

- ◇ From multi award-winning author and artist, Gregg Dreise - a proud descendant of the Kamilaroi and Euahlayi people.
- ◇ Valuable resource for discussion about the importance of moving forward together as a nation, with truth and respect for our history and Traditional Custodians.
- ◇ Timely themes for National Sorry Day and NAIDOC Week.



A picture book for mature readers that does contain some confronting images. Recommended for upper primary.

There is a lot to analyse and take in with this title and it will be a wonderful discussion starter on many of the topics raised. You may like to read it to the class a number of times, each time focusing on a different aspect of the book; first the poem; then the illustrations and accompanying notes; then finally pulling it all together.

Themes:

- Indigenous history
- Australian anthem and flag
- Australia Day
- Unity

Discussion Questions and Activities:

- *Common Wealth* explores Australian history using the words of the national anthem. Before reading, you may wish to review the words to the national anthem with your students. Then, as you are reading, ask students to highlight where the author has referenced the words of the anthem.
- After reading, discuss the words of the national anthem, and how some of the lyrics appeared in the book. Ask students to consider why First Nations people might feel that the language of the anthem “doesn't include me”. Discuss the recent change to the words of the national anthem.
- “Commonwealth” is expressed as one word in the national anthem. After reading, discuss the significance of the title, in particular the two word spelling of “Common Wealth”. Consider how this gives a different meaning to the phrase.
- *Common Wealth* includes a suggestion for a new Australian flag and a new date for Australia Day. Discuss the symbol of the wattle included in the author's suggestions. Compare this to the current Australian flag and date, and contrast the actual and symbolic differences of the current version and the author's suggestion. Drawing on the discussion of the words of the anthem earlier, ask students to think about why First Nations people might feel that the current versions do not include them. How are the author's versions more inclusive?
- The book has an overriding theme of fostering unity, not division, and coming together for a better future. This is particularly evident in the illustrations. Look closely at the illustrations as a class, and discuss the symbolic ways that the book illustrates this idea.
- Create your own painting showing a symbol of unity, and display these in your classroom.