

Sea Country

Written by Aunty Patsy Cameron

Illustrations by Lisa Kennedy

OVERVIEW

In this delightful children's picture book, Aunty Patsy Cameron generously shares the stories and traditions from her family's seasonal island life in Tasmania. With evocative text and stunning illustrations, *Sea Country* lets the reader know when to pick ripe wild cherries, when the moon (mutton) birds fly home and how the nautilus shells smell like the deepest oceans.

Aunty Patsy Cameron, who is a descendant of the Pairebeenne Trawlwoolway clan in Tasmania, weaves a cultural homage to life on Flinder's Island, with stories of collecting shells, fishing in wooden dinghies with long oars, and watching clouds snake their way down Mt Munro. Alongside this tender story, Lisa Kennedy reveals the love and connection to sea and Country through her intricate collages and delicate illustrations that sing country alive.

- First Nations traditional knowledge
- Extraordinary story about identity and place
- Unique and highly evocative illustrations depicting First Nations family life on Flinders Island
- Strong social and cultural history, for all Australians
- A stunning debut children's picture book for Aunty Patsy Cameron
- A stunning addition to the growing suite of significant place-based children's picture books introducing children to First Nations culture

ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

Aunty Patsy Cameron (author) Patsy Cameron is a highly regarded Elder, author, researcher and cultural historian, who recognises the need for an Aboriginal voice and perspective in the interpretation and communication of Tasmanian Aboriginal history, heritage and culture. She is herself a cultural practitioner of the art of shell necklace making, fibre and kelp craft and a storyteller of note in the community. Her approach is inclusive and evidences a life-long commitment to the progressive engagement of Tasmanians with the deep human history of their island.

Lisa Kennedy (illustrator), Lisa Kennedy is a descendant of the coastal Trawlwoolway people of northeast Tasmania. She has been privileged to be part of a team working alongside Aunty Fay Muir on projects that bring together art, story and culture.

THEMES

- Aboriginal Culture; Stories, Country, Artwork
- Aboriginal Seasons and Weather
- Sea
- Flinders Island
- Family

AUDIENCE AND WRITING STYLE

In *Sea Country*, the interplay between words and detailed illustrations reveals a world rich with stories and strong in culture. Sharing her recollections of growing up on Sea Country on Flinders Island, Aunty Patsy Cameron carefully chooses her words so as not to saturate the text, but rather give the reader space to wonder, explore and discover a truly diverse and remarkable place. Inclusions of Aboriginal seasons and weather patterns is interspersed with playtime and traditions, resulting in a beautiful text that is perfectly weighted in both clarity and childhood delight. Readers will return again and again to the intricate illustrations that reveal the wonders of Sea Country. Aimed at an early childhood audience, it is suitable to read-aloud or be read independently.

LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

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

Learning area Year level

English Years F-3

Science Years F-1

HASS (Geography) Year 1

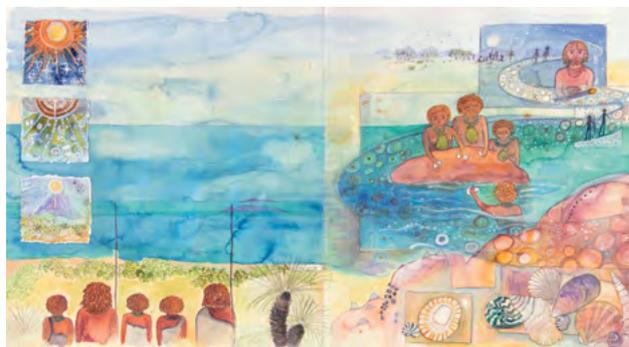
The Arts (Visual Arts) Years F-2

The appendix highlights relevant content descriptions, cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities that relate to the text and classroom ideas provided.

CLASSROOM IDEAS

Before reading, examine the cover, end papers and title of the book. Make predictions about the story, giving reasons for your ideas. What clues do we have that this text includes Aboriginal culture?

- After reading *Sea Country*, discuss how the end papers of the book include many of the elements shared in the text.
- Using both the illustrations and the written text on the first page opening, discuss the characters and setting of *Sea Country*. What is happening in this page opening? What does it mean to be a 'proud, strong people'? How do the illustrations share what Sea Country is like?
- Discuss the sequence of suns on the far-left hand side of the page opening to the right. How is the sequence of time represented? What are the people doing? How does the layered collage reflect the longevity of the people and culture that feature in the text?



- Using the illustrations as a guide, brainstorm on a Y-Chart how *Sea Country* would look, hear and feel. Use your ideas to write a piece of description about this setting.
- What role do ancestors and elders play in sharing the stories of Country with younger generations? Where in the text is there evidence of this taking place?
- On a map of Australia, locate Flinders Island. (<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia>). Where is it in relation to your home? How is Sea Country different from your country?
- Use Google Earth to view the beaches and bush of Flinders Island. The text tells us 'the bush and the beach were our playground'. How do the children play in this space? How do the image on Google Earth compare with the illustrations in *Sea Country*? Write a recount of a time you played at the beach or in the bush.
- What does the author mean when she says 'there was freedom there'? How does the setting in *Sea Country* give the children the opportunity to learn about and practise their culture? What do they learn?
- There are references to forebearers (grandmothers and grandfathers) in the illustrations. Create your own basic family tree to show who you are and where you came from. Why is this valuable to learn about?



CLASSROOM IDEAS CONT.

- What role do the Aunties and Uncles play in *Sea Country*?
- Create a table with labelled diagrams of the different types of shells found in *Sea Country*.
- Throughout the book, vignettes such as the one to the right ('shell collecting on the beach') are used to show different perspectives of the book's subject matter. How do these help readers to gain a fuller understanding of *Sea Country*?



- Why is the line 'rice shells, toothies, black crows, penguins, mairreeners, oat shells, gull shells' formatted in a wavy line? How does this reflect the setting of the text and the necklaces that are made? Create your own necklaces using beads, seed pods or other items.
- What can we tell about the interconnection between people and Country in *Sea Country*? What role does Country play in Aboriginal culture? How is respect for Country shown through a text like *Sea Country*? Use texts such as *Baby Business* by Jasmine Seymour or *Welcome to Country* by Aunty Joy Murphy and Lisa Kennedy to explore this concept further.
- The children in the book tell us that they are 'free to hear Country speaking to us'. How does Country do this? What are they told by Country?
- Create a poster that shares the signs that Country gives about the weather and seasonal changes. How do you know when rain or bad weather is coming in your local area? What can you learn from local indigenous people about weather and seasons in your area?
- Find out more about mutton birds and the role they play in Aboriginal culture. More information can be found at [this link](#).
- Imagine you have just picked up nautilus shells along the beach. Using ideas from the text, write a recount of this episode.

- Look carefully at the page opening to the right. What is happening in the illustration on the right-hand side? What does this tell us about the sharing of stories in Aboriginal culture?
- The Author's Note at the end of the text explains the significance of the shell necklaces. What objects are in your household that you would like to write about? Take a photo of these and share your stories in a 'Show and Tell' to your classmates.
- Share what you know about Summer on Flinders Island. What fruits are plentiful? What are the fruits you enjoy in your local area during Summer?



- Create your own collage to reflect the ideas and images found in *Sea Country*.
- Create a Word Wall for the classroom of the vocabulary used in *Sea Country*. Use illustrations to help students make connections with this language.
- Select one of the characters featured in *Sea Country*. Retell the story in the role of this character.
- Compose a poem to retell what happens when the mutton birds come.
- Recreate your favourite page opening, carefully adopting the illustrator's style in your drawings.
- Using an app such as Explain Everything, share your findings about Aboriginal seasons.
- View the following [BTN clip](#) about Aboriginal Seasons. Take simple notes to help your understanding.



APPENDIX – LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

Year	Curriculum Area
F	English Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none">Recognise that texts are created by authors who tell stories and share experiences that may be similar or different to students' own experiences (ACELT1575)Share feelings and thoughts about the events and characters in texts (ACELT1783)Identify some features of texts including events and characters and retell events from a text (ACELT1578) Science <ul style="list-style-type: none">Daily and seasonal changes in our environment affect everyday life (ACSSU004)
1	English Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none">Recreate texts imaginatively using drawing, writing, performance and digital forms of communication (ACELT1586) Science <ul style="list-style-type: none">Observable changes occur in the sky and landscape (ACSSU019) Hass (Geography) <ul style="list-style-type: none">The weather and seasons of places and the ways in which different cultural groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, describe them (ACHASSK032)
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)
F-2	The Arts Visual Arts <ul style="list-style-type: none">Respond to visual artworks and consider where and why people make visual artworks, starting with visual artworks from Australia, including visual artworks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACAVAR109)
Cross-Curriculum Priority – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures; Sustainability	

