

Open Your Heart To Country

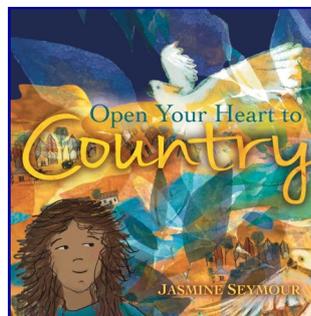
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'Welcome home lost children To land singing you back home Listen to its language Learn how to speak its song' From the award-winning creator of *Baby Business* (2019) and *Cooee Mittigar* (2019) comes a stunning bilingual story of healing and belonging. Told in English and Dharug, *Open Your Heart to Country* is a moving account of reconnection to Country from a First Nations perspective. Sharing the nourishing power of returning home and being immersed in the language of Country, this picture book invites readers to reflect on the importance of place, not only for First Nations' peoples but for everyone. With exquisite illustrations and soft, lilting text, *Open Your Heart to Country* appeals to the very young, while sharing a deeper message for older readers. A book the whole family can enjoy.



Teacher Notes have been based on those supplied by the publisher. A full version is available on our website.

Themes:

- Country
- Identity
- Aboriginal Peoples - Social Life and Customs
- Language
- Culture
- Perspective
- Spirituality

Classroom Ideas:

- There is a small guide at the end of the book which assists with pronunciation of particular sounds in the Dharug language. Read each passage in both Dharug and English.
- Read the passage at the end of book about the Dharug language structure and pronunciation. Work through the different pronunciations and re-read where they appear in the book. Get students to have a go at pronouncing the words.
- Encourage a discussion on why Dharug language does not translate exactly to the same phrases as English phrases. Do any students speak other languages? If so, they may like to think about whether words and phrases in their language translate exactly the same in English. How are they similar or different?
- Facilitate discussion on how Aboriginal peoples' form of communication differs to Western communication. Look at how oral stories play a significant role in Aboriginal peoples' and other First Nations peoples' cultures.
- Facilitate discussion on what being on Country feels like to them. Get students to create a brainstorm about what Country is to them. They can either draw or write their brainstorm ideas.
- Get students to write a poem about a place that makes them feel at home. Go through the descriptive language from *Open Your Heart to Country* and discuss how the language makes you feel. Think-pair-share about what Country means to them or what places make them feel at home. Prompt students with questioning:
 - ◇ Are there certain things that remind you of home whenever you are away? E.g., smell of toast, fresh cut grass
 - ◇ Why do you think Country is important for Aboriginal peoples?
 - ◇ How can we help to look after Country?
 - ◇ What makes a place feel like home?

Art:

- Look at the illustrations throughout the book. Discuss which one is their favourite, and why?
- Get students to explore the images throughout the book and discuss the elements that are being used (e.g., shape, colour). Facilitate discussion on what the illustrations portray? What and how do the elements portray certain aspects?
- Get students to use different forms of art including ICT (e.g. iPad apps) to create their own versions of what Country looks and feels like to them. Ensure students are including various elements to represent their meaning. Students can include a written statement about their piece in regards to why they used certain elements.