

TEACHERS' NOTES

Years 2–4

This Is Home: Essential Australian Poems for Children selected by Jackie French



Published by National Library of Australia, May 2019, ISBN 978-0-642-27938-5
Recommended Year Levels: Years K–6

Author: [Jackie French](#)



Jackie French AM is an Australian author, historian, ecologist and honorary wombat (part-time). She was the 2014–2015 Australian Children’s Laureate and 2015 Senior Australian of the Year. She writes fiction, history, ecology and poems for adults, young adults and children. She is also dyslexic and a patron of literacy programs across Australia, as well as a passionate advocate for equal-opportunity education.

Illustrator: [Tania McCartney](#)



Tania McCartney is an award-winning author, illustrator, editor and children's book obsessive. An ambassador for the Chief Minister's Reading Challenge and the founder of Kids' Book Review, Tania is a fervent advocate for juvenile literacy. She is also mad about illustration, founding the 52-Week Illustration Challenge. In 2019, she launched a podcast, *The Happy Book*, to share her experiences in the publishing industry.

About the Book

In *This Is Home*, much-loved author Jackie French has gathered a poem for every child and every mood. What do you feel like doing today? Sit beside a bush campfire with Oodgeroo Noonuccal, watch people going by with Henry Lawson, float away with Alison Lester, learn to read with Andy Griffiths or be brave with Shaun Tan.

Ideal for sharing with the whole family, this extensively illustrated edition brings together old favourites and sure-to-be new favourites in an indispensable addition to children's bookshelves. From poems that whisper to poems that roar, from words of tranquillity and heartbreak to those of the witty and absurd, there is something within these pages to make everyone feel at home.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM CONTENT

- Learning Area(s)
 - English
 - HASS
- General Capabilities
 - Critical and Creative Thinking
 - Intercultural Understanding
 - Literacy
- Digital Classroom
 - Year 3
 - [Changing Streetscapes](#)
 - [Connections to Country](#)
 - [Australian Symbols](#)
 - [Emblems](#)
 - Year 4
 - [First Contacts](#)
- Cross-curriculum Priorities
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

Introductory Activities

These are activities to do before reading to prepare students for the concepts/themes explored in the book. They are not necessarily curriculum based.

- Look at the cover of the book with the class. What do you think this book will be about? What do you see that makes you say that?

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Select one of the poems from *This Is Home*. Read it aloud to the class.
- Discuss the following strategies for understanding and appreciating a poem:
 - **LOOK** at its structure (stanzas/verses, layout, punctuation)
 - **LISTEN** to it and identify the sounds and patterns of the words (rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, assonance)
 - **THINK** about what the poem means and how the poet has manipulated your response to the subject/theme/mood/meaning/sentiment of the poem
 - **IDENTIFY** the strategies used by the poet to create the poem (repetition, rhetorical questions, syntax, imagery, metaphors, similes, personification).

Activity

- Respond to this poem in one of the following ways:
 - write a response to this poem. How does it make you feel? Which words or phrases in the poem particularly resonate with you? Why?
 - retell the poem in your own words, using either a flowchart or writing it as a narrative
 - write another verse for the poem, using the same style as the original
 - provide a musical accompaniment for a reading of the poem.

Australian Curriculum Content

Years 2–4

English

This Is Home covers a large part of the Australian Curriculum: English for Years 2, 3 and 4. The works within *This Is Home* cover a number of themes that students from diverse backgrounds will find relevant to their lives, make them reflect on the past, and expand their literacy capabilities through poetry and writing, both modern and historical, in varying literary and language styles. As the content of *This Is Home* is so broad and the links to the language and literacy content areas is apparent, the curriculum links included in this document focus on the literature content area of the Year 2, 3 and 4 English curriculum.

Below are extracts from the Year 2, 3, and 4 level descriptions for English from ACARA relevant to *This Is Home*:

- The English curriculum is built around the three interrelated strands of language, literature and literacy.

- In Year 2, students communicate with peers, teachers, students from other classes and community members. In Years 3 and 4, students experience learning in familiar contexts and a range of contexts that relate to study in other areas of the curriculum.
- Students engage with a variety of texts for enjoyment. They listen to, read, view and interpret spoken, written and multimodal texts in which the primary purpose is aesthetic, as well as texts designed to inform and persuade. These encompass traditional oral texts including Indigenous stories, picture books, various types of print and digital texts, simple chapter books, rhyming verse, poetry, non-fiction, film, multimodal texts, dramatic performances and texts used by students as models for constructing their own work.
- Literary texts that support and extend Year 2 students as independent readers involve sequences of events that span several pages and present unusual happenings within a framework of familiar experiences.
- Literary texts that support and extend students in Years 3 and 4 as independent readers describe complex sequences of events that extend over several pages and involve unusual happenings within a framework of familiar experiences.
- These texts use complex language features, including varied sentence structures, some unfamiliar vocabulary, a significant number of high-frequency sight words and words that need to be decoded phonically, and a variety of punctuation conventions, as well as illustrations and diagrams that support and extend the printed text.

For a comprehensive description of the Australian English Curriculum for Years 2, 3 and 4, see:

[Australian Curriculum: English](#).

English—Literature

YEAR 2

Content description: Identify aspects of different types of literary texts that entertain, and give reasons for personal preferences ([ACELT1590 - Scootle](#)).

Elaborations

- describing features of texts from different cultures including recurring language patterns, style of illustrations, elements of humour or drama, and identifying the features which give rise to their personal preferences
- connecting the feelings and behaviours of animals in anthropomorphic stories with human emotions and relationships
- drawing, writing and using digital technologies to capture and communicate favourite characters and events.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- Read aloud the following poems from *This Is Home* to the class: *The Triantiwontigongalope* by C.J. Dennis (page 95), *The Biggest Rock Band in the Land* by Margaret Clark (pages 110–111) and *Fiona the Pig's Dolly Dance* by Leigh Hobbs (page 102).

- Discuss how the poets have used animal characters with human characteristics (anthropomorphism):
 - Why have they used animals rather than real people?
 - Share examples of other poems and/or picture books that use anthropomorphised characters (e.g. the Mr Chicken books by Leigh Hobbs or the Pig the Pug books by Aaron Blabey) and discuss how the characters are depicted.

Activity

- Select one of the three poems mentioned above and write your own version, creating a poem about either:
 - an unusual or strange animal with a long and fantastic name
 - a band or musical ensemble of animal characters OR
 - a dancing animal.
- Draw a picture of the main character in your poem.

Content description: Identify, reproduce and experiment with rhythmic, sound and word patterns in poems, chants, rhymes and songs ([ACELT1592 - Scootle](#)).

Elaborations

- exploring poems, chants, rhymes or songs from different cultures which class members may bring from home
- learning to recite, sing or create interpretations of poems, chants, rhymes or songs from students' own and other different cultures.

Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- Discuss types of poetry that children are already familiar with, such as nursery rhymes or song lyrics.
- Ask them to share with the class favourite poems or songs that they grew up with.
- Discuss how rhymes and songs are an integral part of most cultures.

Activity

- Read the poem *A Gardner's Guide to Poetry* by Meg McKinlay (page 122).
- Create a cardboard poetry tree for the classroom, with a trunk and multiple branches.
- Ask each child to draw and decorate a leaf for the tree, incorporating one of their favourite poems, rhymes or songs.
- Share the poems with the class, and then attach the leaves to the poetry tree for everyone to enjoy.

YEAR 3

Content description: 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 - Scootle](#)).

Elaborations

- identifying and discussing the use of descriptive adjectives ('in the middle of a vast, bare plain') to establish setting and atmosphere ('the castle loomed dark and forbidding') and to draw readers into events that follow
- discussing the language used to describe the traits of characters in stories, their actions and motivations: 'Claire was so lonely; she desperately wanted a pet and she was afraid she would do anything, just anything, to have one to care for'.

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Read aloud the poem *My Country* by Dorothea Mackellar (page 92).
- Discuss the language the poet uses to evoke the Australian landscape.
- Discuss why this poem has become an integral part of the Australian 'story'.

Activity

- Underline the adjectives used in the poem to describe the landscape.
- Use some of these adjectives to write a poem describing the people or the animals who live in Australia (e.g. sunburnt, ragged, jewel, crimson, lithe).

Content description: Discuss the nature and effects of some language devices used to enhance meaning and shape the reader's reaction, including rhythm and onomatopoeia in poetry and prose ([ACELT1600 - Scootle](#)).

Elaborations

- identifying the effect of imagery in texts, for example the use of imagery related to nature in haiku poems
- exploring how rhythm, onomatopoeia and alliteration give momentum to poetry and prose read aloud, and enhance enjoyment.

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Using Anna Pignataro's *Haiku* (page 85) as a starting point, discuss haiku:
 - Where does this type of poetry come from?
 - What is its structure?
 - How do you write it?
- Discuss other types of poetic devices that can be used in poetry, including rhythm, onomatopoeia and alliteration.
- Read aloud examples from *This Is Home* featuring these poetic devices (e.g. *The Biggest Rock Band in the Land* by Margaret Clark (pages 110–111) uses rhyme, rhythm, alliteration and onomatopoeia).

Activity

- Identify your favourite season of the year.
- Write two poems about your favourite season using different poetic structures:
 - haiku, to capture your emotional response
 - rhyming couplets, to create a poem that evokes the season's sights, sounds and rhythms.

YEAR 4

English

Content description: Make connections between the ways different authors may represent similar storylines, ideas and relationships ([ACELT1602 - Scootle](#)).

Elaborations

- commenting on how authors have established setting and period in different cultures and times and the relevance of characters, actions and beliefs to their own time
- comparing different authors' treatment of similar themes and text patterns, for example comparing fables and allegories from different cultures and quest novels by different authors.

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss the ways in which the Aboriginal poets Oodgeroo Noonuccal and Bronwyn Bancroft write about their connections to the past and to country in their poems *The Past* (page 5) and *Home* (page 6).
- Identify the poetic devices they use to evoke the past and to create an emotional response in the reader.

Activity

- Write a poem about the places, people and experiences from the past that have shaped who you are now.

Content description: Understand, interpret and experiment with a range of devices and deliberate word play in poetry and other literary texts, for example nonsense words, spoonerisms, neologisms and puns ([ACELT1606 - Scootle](#)).

Elaborations

- defining spoonerisms, neologisms and puns and exploring how they are used by authors to create a sense of freshness, originality and playfulness
- discussing poetic language, including unusual adjectival use and how it engages us emotionally and brings to life the poet's subject matter, for example 'He grasps the crag with crooked hands' (Alfred, Lord Tennyson); 'Wee ... tim'rous beastie' (Robert Burns).

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss the range of poetic devices and word play that can be used to create interesting poems.
- Select poems from *This Is Home* to illustrate how these devices can be used (e.g. similes and metaphors in *Meeting Australia* by Jackie French [page 72], *A Dessert Sky* by Jackie Hosking [page 78] and *Reminiscence* by Judith Wright [page 88]; or Andy Griffiths' cheeky poem *Learn to Read with Andy* [pages 106–109], which sends up basal readers and the controlled vocabulary approach used by the likes of Dr Seuss).

Activity

- Create a poem about the Australian landscape using a range of poetic devices to evoke a landscape that is special to you OR

- Write a nonsense or humorous poem about an aspect of school life.

HASS

This Is Home broadly incorporates several themes throughout the HASS curriculum, especially those relating to Australian history. These include Aboriginal culture, colonial life, convicts, pioneers, bushrangers, swagmen, Anzacs, immigrants and the environment.

Teachers may like to use *This Is Home* as a resource to bring a literature element into their HASS studies.

For a comprehensive description of the Australian HASS Curriculum for Years 2, 3, and 4, see [Australian Curriculum: HASS](#).

Concluding Activities

- **Readers' Theatre**
 - Readers' Theatre encourages oral reading fluency and public speaking skills.
 - Begin with the teacher selecting two poems from *This Is Home* and reading them aloud to the class to demonstrate how to:
 - vary tenor and tone of voice to denote different characters
 - use intonation and volume to create mood
 - vary pacing and volume to emphasise rhythm
 - use staccato and flowing rhythms to create drama and tension
 - vary the voice (from monotone and expressionless, to gentle and inviting, to loud and dramatic).
 - Discuss with the class which poems from *This Is Home* should be included in your Readers' Theatre, examining in particular which ones will be good to read aloud and why.
 - Select two contrasting poems and two students to present each poem.
 - Ask the students to break the poems up into 'parts', like a play, and then present them to the class in a way that brings the poems to life and engages the audience.
- **What sort of poem are you?**
 - Read the poem *What I Am/What I'm Not* by Meredith Costain (page 128) to the class.
 - Discuss the underlying themes of this poem, including the concept of stereotypes.
 - Ask the students to write a poem that reflects who they are, through both the activities they enjoy and the structure of the poetic form they choose (e.g. a song, a ballad, rhyming couplets, a limerick, a nonsense poem, haiku etc).
- **My Country**
 - Read the poem *My Country* by Dorothea Mackellar (page 92).
 - Discuss what it tells you about the land on which we live.
 - Respond to the poem in a number of different ways:
 - use collage techniques to create images based on the descriptive passages in the poem
 - compose a poem about an environment or place that is important to you (e.g. a city, a beach, a forest, a desert)

- rewrite the poem as a factual piece of writing about the weather conditions in Australia that cause floods, droughts and bushfires.
- **Visual responses**
 - Discuss how illustrator Tania McCartney's images in *This Is Home* enhance our understanding and enjoyment of the poems:
 - What styles has she used?
 - How has she varied the imagery to suit the mood, subject and theme for each poem?
 - Compare different artistic responses to the same poem by examining the images used by Tania McCartney in *Waltzing Matilda* by A.B. Paterson (page 40) to that used in the two picture books called *Waltzing Matilda*, one illustrated by Desmond Digby (Collins, 1970) and the other by Freya Blackwood (Scholastic, 2005):
 - How have they each depicted the main character?
 - How have they depicted the setting?
 - What media have they used?
 - What artistic styles have they employed?
 - How have they interpreted the mood of this narrative poem?
 - Which version do you think is the most effective interpretation of the poem? Why?
 - Select one of the poems and create your own visual response to it:
 - think carefully about the composition, shapes, textures, colours, hues and perspectives that will best express your response to the poem
 - use the appropriate media to creatively illustrate your poem—photographs, watercolour, pencil, acrylic, pencil, pastels, collages, sharpie pens, computer generation, mixed media
 - explain your artistic choices to the class
 - discuss how and why poems can evoke different intellectual, emotional and visual responses.
 - Read a number of picture books with poetic texts (see examples below):
 - examine and analyse the structure of the picture book, including which parts of the poem the illustrator has chosen to illustrate
 - discuss how the illustrator has interpreted the poem visually and narratively
 - create a picture book using the text of one of the narrative poems in *This Is Home*.

Further Reading

- Australian Picture Books with animal characters:
 - *Mr Chicken Goes to Paris* by Leigh Hobbs (Allen & Unwin, 2011)
 - *Pig the Pug* by Aaron Blabey (Scholastic, 2014)
- Australian Picture Books with poetic texts:
 - *Click Go the Shears* by Robert Ingpen (Angus & Robertson, 1993)
 - *Midnight at the Library* by Ursula Dubosarsky and Ron Brooks (NLA Publishing, 2018)
 - *Mulga Bill's Bicycle* by A.B. Paterson and Kilmeny and Deborah Niland (Collins, 1978)
 - *My Country* by Dorothea Mackellar and Andrew McLean (Omnibus, 2010)

- *Pea Pod Lullaby* by Glenda Millard and Stephen Michael King (Allen & Unwin, 2017)
- *The Jabberwocky* by Lewis Carroll and Graeme Base (Macmillan, 1987)
- *The Man from Snowy River* by A.B. Paterson and Freya Blackwood (Scholastic, 2004)
- *Waltzing Matilda* by A.B. Paterson and Desmond Digby (Collins, 1970)
- *Waltzing Matilda* by A.B. Paterson and Freya Blackwood (Scholastic, 2005)
- Websites
 - Australian Children's Poetry at australianchildrenspoetry.com.au