

TEACHERS' NOTES

Years 5 and 6

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



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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 5
 - [Convict Experiences](#)
 - [The Promise of Gold](#)
 - [Inland Adventures](#)
 - Year 6
 - [The Poet of Australia](#)
 - [A National Identity](#)
- 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 following ways:
 - write your own response to this poem. How does it make you feel? Which words 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

Year 5–6

English

This Is Home covers a large part of the Australian Curriculum: English for Years 5 and 6. 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 5 and 6 English curriculum.

Below are extracts from the Year 5 and 6 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 5 and 6, students communicate with peers, teachers, students from other classes and community members.
- Students engage with a variety of texts for enjoyment. They listen to, read, view, interpret and evaluate spoken, written and multimodal texts in which the primary purpose is aesthetic, as well as texts designed to inform and persuade. These include various types of media texts including newspapers, film and digital texts, junior and early adolescent novels, poetry, non-fiction and dramatic performances. Students develop their understanding of how texts, including media texts, are influenced by context, purpose and audience.
- The range of literary texts for Foundation to Year 10 comprises Australian literature, including the oral narrative traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as the contemporary literature of these two cultural groups, and classic and contemporary world literature, including texts from and about Asia.
- Literary texts that support and extend students in Years 5 and 6 as independent readers describe complex sequences, a range of non-stereotypical characters and elaborated events including flashbacks and shifts in time. These texts explore themes of interpersonal relationships and ethical dilemmas within real-world and fantasy settings. Informative texts supply technical and content information about a wide range of topics of interest as well as

topics being studied in other areas of the curriculum. Text structures include chapters, headings and subheadings, tables of contents, indexes and glossaries. Language features include complex sentences, unfamiliar technical vocabulary, figurative language, and information presented in various types of graphics.

For a comprehensive description of the Australian English Curriculum for Years 5 and 6, see: [Australian Curriculum: English](#).

English—Literature

Year 5

Content description: Identify aspects of literary texts that convey details or information about particular social, cultural and historical contexts ([ACELT1608 - Scootle](#)).

Elaborations

- describing how aspects of literature—for example visuals, symbolic elements, dialogue and character descriptions—can convey information about cultural elements, such as beliefs, traditions and customs
- identifying variability within cultural contexts in literary texts, recognising the diversity of people’s experiences within a cultural group such as differences in setting and lifestyle between urban and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- *This Is Home* begins and ends with a poem by Aboriginal author and activist Oodgeroo Noonuccal (*The Past* on page 5 and *A Song of Hope* on page 150). Read these poems aloud to the class.
- Discuss why Jackie French might have selected these two poems to bookend this collection of Australian poetry.
- Discuss how Aboriginal poets Oodgeroo Noonuccal and Bronwyn Bancroft evoke the past and write about their connections to country in their poems *The Past* (page 5), *Home* (page 6) and *A Song of Hope*.
- What poetic devices do they use to evoke their memories and to create an emotional response in the reader?

Activity

- Write a poem that evokes your own past and the places, people and experiences that shaped who you are now.
- Include references to your cultural background and the history of your family.

Content description: Understand, interpret and experiment with sound devices and imagery, including simile, metaphor and personification, in narratives, shape poetry, songs, anthems and odes ([ACELT1611 - Scootle](#)).

Elaborations

- discussing how figurative language including simile and metaphor can make use of a comparison between different things, for example ‘My love is like a red, red rose’; ‘Tyger!, Tyger! burning bright, In the forests of the night’; and how by appealing to the imagination, it provides new ways of looking at the world
- investigating the qualities of contemporary protest songs, for example those about Indigenous peoples and those about the environment.

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Discuss the range of poetic devices and word play that can be used to create interesting poems, especially simile, metaphor and personification.
- Select poems from *This Is Home* to illustrate how these devices can be used (e.g. *Meeting Australia* by Jackie French [page 72], *A Dessert Sky* by Jackie Hosking [page 78], *Reminiscence* by Judith Wright [page 88]) and conservation poems such as *This Book Was Once a Beautiful Tree* by Danny Katz (page 103) and *Horns* by Shaun Tan (page 146).

Activity

- Create a poem about the Australian environment using a range of poetic devices to evoke a landscape that is special to you and to champion its conservation.

Year 6

Content description: Make connections between students’ own experiences and those of characters and events represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts ([ACELT1613 - Scootle](#)).

Elaborations

- recognising the influence our different historical, social and cultural experiences may have on the meaning we make from the text and the attitudes we may develop towards characters, actions and events

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Read the poems *Botany Bay* (page 9) and *The Glass Man* by Mark Greenwood (page 15) about convicts, and *The Wild Colonial Boy* (page 12) and *The Sash* by Stephen Whiteside (pages 28–30) about bushrangers.
- Discuss the structural aspects of ballads and other poetic formats used to carry a narrative.
- What do these poems tell us about Australian history?
- Whose perspective have they been written from?
- How were bushrangers and convicts regarded in colonial times as compared to today?

Activity

- Research the story of a convict or bushranger from your part of Australia and write a ballad, retelling their story from one of the following perspectives:

- the convict or bushranger
- a settler from colonial times OR
- a modern-day historian.

Content description: Analyse and evaluate similarities and differences in texts on similar topics, themes or plots ([ACELT1614 - Scootle](#)).

Elaborations

- exploring texts on a similar topic by authors with very different styles, for example comparing fantasy quest novels or realistic novels on a specific theme, identifying differences in the use of narrator, narrative structure and voice and language style and register

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Read the following poems about the Australian landscape in *This Is Home: Storm* by Frané Lessac (page 68), *Meeting Australia* by Jackie French (page 72), *A Dessert Sky* by Jackie Hosking (page 78) and *My Country* by Dorothea Mackellar (page 92).
- Discuss the different ways in which the authors structure their poems, create imagery and tell their story.

Activity

- Select two poems, photocopy and print out each poem.
- Cut out the individual lines for each poem and reorganise them to create a totally new poem.
- Share your reconstructed poem with the class.
- Discuss the following:
 - Does it still deal with the environmental subject matter of the original poems?
 - How well—or how badly—do the two poems mesh together to create a new whole?
 - Can you still identify the ‘voice’ of the original authors in the rehashed poem?

Content description: Identify and explain how choices in language—for example modality, emphasis, repetition and metaphor—influence personal response to different texts ([ACELT1615 - Scootle](#)).

Elaborations

- Noting how degrees of possibility are opened up through the use of modal verbs (for example, ‘It may be a solution’ as compared to ‘It could be a solution’), as well as through other resources such as adverbs (for example, ‘It’s possibly/probably/certainly a solution’), adjectives (for example, ‘It’s a possible/probable/certain solution’); and nouns (for example, ‘It’s a possibility/probability’).

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Read the poems *A Palace of God* by Leo Barnard (page 138) and *Ward* by Shaun Tan (page 124).
- Discuss your emotional responses to these two poems, which deal with the difficult subjects of homelessness and illness.

- Examine the language and poetic devices used by these authors to explore difficult subjects. Discuss the following:
 - How successfully have they emotionally engaged the reader?
 - What roles do the 'owl' and the 'god' metaphors play in the poems?
 - Why have both authors used first person in these poems? How have they created their 'voice'?

Activity

- Write a poem about a cause, event or situation that is important to you.
- Create words and images that convey your emotions, your doubts, your fears and your convictions about this subject.
- Use similar poetic devices to those used in these two poems, including first-person voice, metaphors and unusual poetic constructions.

Content description: Identify, describe, and discuss similarities and differences between texts, including those by the same author or illustrator, and evaluate characteristics that define an author's individual style ([ACELT1616 - Scootle](#)).

Elaborations

- Exploring two or more texts by the same author, drawing out the similarities, for example subject or theme, characterisation, text structure, plot development, tone, vocabulary, sense of voice, narrative point of view, favoured grammatical structures and visual techniques in sophisticated picture books

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Read the three poems by Libby Hathorn: *Cindric's Trolley* (page 57), *Rainforest Song* (page 61) and *The Teacher Took My Tennis Ball* (page 113).
- Identify the themes of the three poems.
- Discuss how Hathorn uses different poetic devices and formats for each subject area.
- Explore the similarities and differences between the poetic techniques used in the three poems.
- Discuss the illustrator's responses to the three poems:
 - What visual techniques has she used to illustrate each poem?
 - How has she captured the different themes and tones of the three poems?

Activity

- Respond visually to one of these poems, creating your own images using whatever media best reflects the underlining meaning and intent of the poem (e.g. photographs, watercolour, pencil, acrylic, pencil, pastels, collages, sharpie pens, computer generation, mixed media).

Content description: Identify the relationship between words, sounds, imagery and language patterns in narratives and poetry such as ballads, limericks and free verse ([ACELT1617 - Scootle](#)).

Elaborations

- identifying how language choice and imagery build emotional connection and engagement with the story or theme

- describing how a character’s experience expressed through a verse novel impacts on students personally, how the author controls the revelation of the experiences and how the verse story builds meaning to its climax when we understand the whole

Discussion/Inquiry Question

- Read the poems *Anzac Cove* by Leon Gellert (pages 48–49) and *Other People* by Chris Wallace-Crabbe (page 50).
- Discuss the different structures used by each author (ballad and free verse) and their different approaches to war and its effects.
- Discuss how each poet engages the reader emotionally in their narrative.

Activity

- Use either a ballad or free-verse structure to create a narrative poem that reflects your view of war and/or conflict.

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 5 and 6, 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, looking in particular at 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* (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* (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 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