

The Magpie and the Snake

Study Guide

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Overview for Scheme of Work	4
Navigator	5
Lesson Plans	6

NAVIGATOR

Chapter	Plot outline
Prologue	Sitting in his rocky aerie, gazing over the treetops at a big storm, the Clever Man, Nymbiny, feels unsettled. He drinks a sacred potion and has a vision of a hero, Balagaan, fighting a rival for a girl, Gawngan.
Chapter 1	Young Balagaan and his cousins, Yirinyin and Irindilli, watch the men from their clan the fighting ground. In a rainforest clearing, two Clever Men from rival mobs convene as tensions rise over a disputed betrothal, leading to a fierce battle between the Nyangbal and Rain Forest warriors, marked by expert dodges and skillful maneuvers with deadly weapons, ultimately setting the stage for a prolonged struggle of attrition, though without any fatal casualties thus far.
Chapter 2	In this chapter, tensions between the Rain Forest and Nyangbal mobs escalate as they prepare for battle over a disputed betrothal. Despite the intervention of Nyimbiny, the Clever Man, and Balagaan's attempt to end the conflict, the battle continues until Janguy is ultimately defeated, leading to a decisive ruling in favor of the Nyangbal mob.
Chapter 3	The Nyangbal campsite, situated on the edge of the rainforest, boasted circular huts where activities like weaving and toolmaking took place. Amidst playful mud fights among the children, Yirinyin senses Balagaan likes Gawngan and playfully teases him in front of their grandfather. Balagaan's grandfather warns Balagaan that he mustn't get too friendly with her as the lore forbids them from marrying.
Chapter 4	Balagaan's growing affection for Gawngan is complicated by her betrothal to Janguy's son, a bully he confronts on the beach. Their altercation escalates until a magpie intervenes, causing the bullies to retreat, leaving Balagaan reflecting on the complexities of their relationships and potential fate.
Chapter 5	Nuree wakes Balagaan from a disturbing dream and leads him to a secret meeting with Gawngan in a sacred clearing, where they share their first kiss. Despite his nervousness, Balagaan finds newfound confidence and exhilaration in Gawngan's presence, but their intimate moment is interrupted by the sight of a black snake, symbolizing potential danger ahead.
Chapter 6	Balagaan wakes up to learn that Gawngan's mob is leaving, prompting him to rush to say goodbye. Despite warnings from his grandfather and members from his mother's tribe, Balagaan manages to give Gawngan a parting gift. He faces familial disapproval for his affection towards her.
Chapter 7	Balagaan, Irindilli, and Yirinyin are preparing to move inland from their village near the beach. They carry salmon in coolamons as they reflect on leaving behind their comfortable surroundings and abundant food. Along the journey, they engage in playful banter and tasks assigned by their grandfather.
Chapter 8	Balagaan and his family arrive at another campsite where they'll stay for the season. They begin repairing the huts while sharing jokes and chores. Meanwhile, Balagaan's romantic involvement with a girl named Gawngan leads to consequences when an elder questions their relationship. As a result, Balagaan is tasked with living among another tribe to learn their customs and language, with the added responsibility of choosing a wife from his new tribe so he can move on from Gawngan.
Chapter 9	Yirinyin embarks on his first guruuman hunt, feeling conflicted about hunting kangaroos, his totem. During the hunt, he witnesses a mishap where his grandfather is injured by a

	kangaroo. Yirinyin assists in treating his grandfather's wound with traditional remedies, feeling both guilt and responsibility for the incident.
Chapter 10	Yirinyin and the Nyangbal warriors trail through the bush on a well-worn path, carrying their catch and Bolim on a stretcher. Suddenly, they encounter a group of unfamiliar, white-skinned men in a large canoe, the Yirraalii, who communicate clumsily and seem unprepared for their surroundings. As tensions rise and the Nyangbal men observe the Yirraalii's strange behavior, an altercation ensues, leaving one of the Nyangbal men injured by a mysterious weapon wielded by the Yirraalii. In the aftermath, they retreat, but the encounter leaves them uneasy and wary of the newcomers' presence in their territory.
Chapter 11	A hunting party returns to camp to find the villagers in commotion after encountering the Yirraalii, leaving one of the men wounded. As they recount the encounter, differing perspectives emerge, with some emphasizing humor and others seriousness. Concerns escalate as they discover evidence of the Yirraalii's potentially lethal weapons, leading to a village council where opinions clash on how to respond, ultimately deciding to retreat deeper into the forest to avoid conflict.
Chapter 12	Balagaan returns home after eight years away, now a man initiated into the Red Soil people's ways. He reconnects with his family and friends at a gathering, where he meets Gawngan, his former love interest. However, he discovers she is now married to another man due to an arranged marriage. Angered by the situation, Balagaan decides to seek out Nyimbiny, a powerful figure who might have a solution to cancel Gawngan's marriage. With the guidance of his grandfather, Bolim, Balagaan sets out to find Nyimbiny, determined to change Gawngan's fate.
Chapter 13	Balagaan stands alone on a clifftop, summoning Nyimbiny the Clever Man for guidance, wrestling with fear and uncertainty about his future. As he awaits Nyimbiny's arrival, he grapples with doubts and apprehensions about the path ahead, ultimately confronting a challenging situation involving a perilous tree climbing competition. Despite his fear of heights and facing obstacles from rivals, Balagaan finds courage through the support of his companions and a determination to overcome his fears and pursue his goals.
Chapter 14	Balagaan, urged by Irindilli's encouragement, overcomes his fear and climbs the tree, fueled by his love for Gawngan and hatred for Dangan. Despite facing numerous challenges and witnessing dangerous confrontations between climbers, Balagaan persists, aided by Yirinyin and Irindilli's guidance. In a daring move, Balagaan leaps for the possum skin rug, successfully grabbing it from Dangan's reach, but sustains injuries in the process, ultimately achieving his goal with Irindilli's support.
Chapter 15	Balagaan, battered and bruised from his climb, faces accusations of taboo-breaking and cheating from Dangan. Despite protests, he is sentenced to the Spear Ordeal for breaking the lore by pursuing a forbidden relationship with Gawngan. As the ordeal unfolds, Balagaan bravely faces spears thrown at him, deflecting most until Dangan, consumed by fury, delivers a deadly blow to Balagaan's leg, causing him to collapse in pain as Gawngan rushes to his side.
Chapter 16	Irindilli, Yirinyin, and Gawngan arrive first, finding Balagaan injured with a spear shaft lodged in his leg. Despite the severity of his injury, Balagaan insists on continuing the ordeal to prove his worth. With the support of his friends and the intervention of elders, Balagaan faces Dangan's final spear, emerging victorious. However, the resolution of his relationship with Gawngan remains uncertain, as the elders must negotiate a solution within the constraints of their lore.

LESSON 1

Focus: Cover, blurb, preliminary/end matter
First impressions

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Share impressions about the novel based on the cover and blurb, and some of the contents
- Make predictions about the genre and text
- Skim and scan for information in the text

Engage

Explain to the class they are going to read a novel set in Australia on the cusp of the British settlement of Australia that explores the concept of **conflict and adversity**. Ask them to think about what they know about the way the Aboriginal people lived before the British arrived. Then hand out copies of **WS 1** to students and ask them to fill in the first column with everything they can think of about Aboriginal culture and society at this time. Take feedback from the class and write it on the board.

Then tell students the novel they will be studying is called *The Magpie and the Snake*. The title is named after the totems of the hero and the villain of the book. Ask them what a 'totem' is and explain it is a term for the spirit animal an Aboriginal person must care for and that they have a special relationship with it.

Explore

Hand out copies of the novel to the class and explain that they will be conducting a hunt to find ten pieces of 'treasure' – information that they will be able to find in (or on) the book. They will be working in pairs to complete this activity.

Then display **OHT1**, which has the ten clues needed. You may wish to time the hunt or offer an incentive to the first team to correctly find all ten pieces of information.

Once most pairs are finished, take feedback. Answers (as well as the place information can be found in the Rollercoasters edition) are as follows:

1. Ballina, NSW, Australia (you may have to visit www.magpiepublishers.com to find this out)
2. 'This book is for the Bullinaa mob and for all Australians...' (under 'Acknowledgement of Country')
3. Balagaan
4. 2021 (imprint page)

5. The Bundjalung nation (map in the 'Introduction')
6. Sixteen
7. See the very back of book 'Bundjalung stories and characters'.
8. Ballina, Lismore, Murwillumbah, Alstonville, Tweed Heads, Kingscliff, Brunswick Heads, Byron Bay, (map in the 'Introduction' has many.)
9. Lots of choices (see glossary at back of book)
10. *Gawngaan and the Marriage Tree* and *Savages* (Visit www.magpiepublishers.com to find out).

Transform

Ask students to think about the information they have just gathered and explain that they will be making predictions about the book they are about to read. Then, in pairs, ask them to discuss the following questions:

- What sort of book do they think it is? (A comedy, a romance, a historical fiction, etc.)
- Why do they think it has been called *The Magpie and the Snake*?
- Who do they think will be the narrator of the story? (Balagaan, another character, or an invisible third-person narrator.)
- How do they think the story will end?
- Why do they think Steve Trotter chose to write this book? Why has he dedicated it to 'the Bullinaa mob and all Australians'?

When they have answered the questions, invite students to write down one or two questions they have about what will happen in the novel. Take feedback.

Review and reflect

'Telling the truth about our history not only brings to light colonial conflict and dispossession, but also acknowledges the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures.

...The Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation makes clear:

Our nation must have the courage to own the truth, to heal the wounds of its past so that we can move on together at peace with ourselves.'

<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/our-work/truth-telling/>

What do you think Trotter might introduce us to, to help us 'heal the wounds of... our (sic) past'?

Homework

Ask students to return to their work at the start of the lesson, and to fill in the second column of their chart on **WS 1** with what they would like to know about Aboriginal culture, based on their prior knowledge and their work in this lesson.

Worksheet 1

Knowledge chart

The Magpie and the Snake is set in pre-colonial Australia. How much do you know about this country?

What I know about Aboriginal culture and society	What I want to know about Aboriginal culture and society	What I have learned about Aboriginal culture and society

OHT 1

Treasure hunt

You are going on a literary treasure hunt!
Use your detective skills and a copy of *The Magpie and the Snake* to find answers to the clues below...



1. Where did the author of *The Magpie and the Snake* grow up?
2. Who did Steve Trotter dedicate *The Magpie and the Snake* to?
3. What is the name of the main character in *The Magpie and the Snake*?
4. When was this novel first published?
5. Name the Aboriginal Nation that the Nyangbal clan belongs to.
6. How many chapters are there in *The Magpie and the Snake*?
7. On what page will you find the traditional Bundjalung stories that *The Magpie and the Snake* draws on for this story?
8. Name three **towns or cities** that lie in Bundjalung territory.
9. Name two terms that you can find in the glossary and explain what they mean.
10. What are the names of the sequels to *The Magpie and the Snake*?

LESSON 2

Focus: Chapter 1
Context/Language

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Explore the link between the novel and its geographical and cultural setting
- Work out the meaning of unfamiliar words
- Identify narrative techniques

Engage

As homework for Lesson 1, students will have come up with a list of things they would like to know about Aboriginal culture and society. Ask them to feed these back to the class and gather the main ones on the board.

Then ask students to turn to the introduction of the novel and look at the map of the Bundjalung nation and the Nyangbal people's country. Ask them look at its geographical situation – the fact that it is in Australia, that it is an island, and that it is a small territory on the East coast. Ask them what they think it might be like to live there. Why might their territory be so small compared to one of the tribes who lived inland? What language might be spoken? What might the climate be like? Students will probably have picked up some impressions from places they have visited on the East coast of NSW but try to get them to imagine what life might have been like for a person living in an Aboriginal camp in the bush.

Explore

Aboriginal culture, overall, has a long and peaceful history in Australia of dealing with adversity diplomatically. Although this peaceful approach to conflict was severely tested when the British invaded Australia, their non-violent approach to politics continues to this day.

Put students into groups and distribute the cards on **WS 2a** (which replicates and expands the activity on page 5 of the Reading Guide) as well as a sheet of A3 paper and a marker pen. They then have ten minutes to draw a timeline on the paper and stick the cards on to the timeline in the correct order.

Transform

Still in groups, students read Chapter 1. As they read, ask them to write down any unfamiliar words and to guess at what they think that word might be from the text. When they have finished reading, distribute **WS 2b**, which is a card matching activity.

They will need to match each word up with its definition.

After reading, students should also discuss the following questions in their groups:

- What are your first impressions of Balagaan, Nyimbiny and the other characters?
- What is your impression of the importance of Aboriginal lore and the way it is enforced in Aboriginal society?
- What is your impression of the Aboriginal approach to 'warfare'?

This is an appropriate point to undertake a session of guided reading. **WS 2c** provides a suggested plan for doing so.

Review and reflect

Now that students have considered their first impressions of the text, ask them why they think that Steve Trotter chose to include a Prologue. How does it contribute to the first impressions they have of the story? Then ask them to consider why they think Steve Trotter chose to open Chapter One at the fighting ground. They might suggest, for example, that it establishes the importance of the lore for Aboriginal people in everyday life, that it paints a picture of a people who can solve conflicts incredibly peacefully and diplomatically, or that it adds intrigue about the Aboriginal people, or that it provides the reader with an opportunity to meet Balagaan and his cousins and foreshadows later events, involving the Clever Man/or Janguy's son.

Homework

Students explore the terms '**conflict**' and '**adversity**', and their opposites, on [wordhippo](http://wordhippo.com).

Using some of the words from their research, students create **mind maps**** of the different types of conflict found in stories:

- conflict between a character and their external world (global conflict)
- conflict between characters (local conflict)
- conflict within a character (inner conflict)

Students think of a book, movie, comic or show they know and identify the 3 types of conflict in it.

Students discuss their responses to consolidate learning, in pairs, in groups or as a class.

*<https://www.wordhippo.com/>

**either on paper or a free mind mapping site

Extension

Balagaan draws on his courage to stop the big fight. For homework, students think of a time when they had to overcome a significant **obstacle or challenge** and record it in their reading journal.

Worksheet 2a

Aboriginal Australia timeline

<p>80,000+ BCE Evidence discovered that Aboriginal people have been living in Australia for 80,000+ years.</p>	<p>Pre-1788 Aboriginal societies develop diverse cultures, languages, and social structures across Australia, creating 80,000 plus years of peace across the continent.</p>
<p>1770 Captain Cook claims possession of the east coast of Australia for Britain, despite the presence of Indigenous peoples.</p>	<p>1788 First Fleet arrives, and the British invasion begins. This event leads to significant disruptions to Indigenous societies and cultures.</p>
<p>Early 1800s Frontier conflicts erupt as the European settlers colonise the country. The British shoot and poison the Aboriginal people to claim their ancestral lands.</p>	<p>1835 47 years after the arrival of the First Fleet, NSW Governor Richard Bourke implements the legal principle of terra nullius in Australian law as the basis for British settlement. The term means, "land belonging to no one". His interpretation was that there was a complete absence of "civilised" people capable of land ownership.</p>
<p>1838 The Myall Creek Massacre in New South Wales highlights the extreme violence and brutality faced by Indigenous Australians during the frontier wars.</p>	<p>Late 1800s "protection" and "assimilation" policies are passed. Aboriginal children are forcibly removed from their families (Stolen Generations).</p>
<p>1962 The Commonwealth Electoral Act is amended to grant Indigenous Australians the right to vote in federal elections.</p>	<p>1967 A referendum is passed to include Indigenous Australians in the census and to give the Australian Parliament the power to legislate specifically for them.</p>
<p>1970s-80s The Aboriginal land rights movement gains significant legal and political victories for Indigenous Australians, including the landmark Mabo decision in 1992, which recognizes native title rights.</p>	<p>1984 The Pintupi Nine, a group of Pintupi people, avoided the British and lived a traditional desert-dwelling life in the Gibson Desert. They came out of the desert in 1984 after the death of their father, the patriarchal figure who would have insisted they stay away from the British invaders.</p>
<p>1997 The Bringing Them Home report is released, acknowledging and documenting the impact of the Stolen Generations policies on Indigenous families and communities.</p>	<p>2008 The Australian Government formally apologises to the Stolen Generations, acknowledging the historical injustices and trauma inflicted upon Indigenous Australians.</p>
<p>2017 The Uluru Statement from the Heart is released, calling for constitutional reforms to recognize Indigenous sovereignty and establish a First Nations Voice to Parliament.</p>	<p>2023 Australians vote against recognising Indigenous sovereignty and establishing a First Nations Voice to Parliament.</p>

Worksheet 2b

Glossary definitions

Baygal	A man.
Gabal	Bush; big scrub, forest, rainforest.
Bundjalung	The Aboriginal language spoken in NE NSW and SE QLD. Also refers to the area those speakers live in.
Janangan	A boy.
Wiiyang	A Clever Man.
Dubay	A girl.
Babaraa	The great creator; God.
Coolamon	A long dish with shallow, curved sides. It was used for carrying all sorts of things from yams to babies.

Worksheet 2c

Guided reading plan: Lesson 2

Teaching intention

To consolidate the skill of using context to deduce the meaning of new vocabulary.

To introduce the skill of relating texts to their historical context.

To consolidate the skills of re-reading and finding evidence in a text.

Introduction

Remind students that they will be reading the opening chapters of the novel, and that the function of a good story opening is to interest the reader and make them keep reading. Story openings can describe a character, a setting, or an event, but they will set the mood or tone for the rest of the book. After reading, they will need to answer the following questions:

- What are your first impressions of Balagaan?
- What do you think the story is going to be about?
- What do you think about the way the Bundjalung words are introduced into the story?
- What is your impression of how Aboriginal people resolved their conflicts before the British came?

Remind students that, as they read, they should write down any words that they are unfamiliar with, especially Bundjalung words, and guess what they think each word means.

Strategy check

- Check that students understand there are two parts to their task: to answer the questions by referring closely to the text and to identify and attempt to define unfamiliar words.
- Check that students understand that they should guess the meaning of the unfamiliar words based on context or evidence in the text.
- Check that students know that they should NOT use the glossary at the back of the book at this point.

Independent reading

Students read the Prologue and Chapters 1-2 independently, making notes about unfamiliar words as they go. Then, as a group, they discuss the questions. Support them as they do this.

Return to the text

Hand out the cards from **WS 2b** and ask students to work in groups to match up the words with their definitions from the glossary.

Review

Ask each group to report back to the class with the results of their discussion, and their first impressions of the characters and setting.

LESSON 3

Focus: Chapters 3 and 4
Building character

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Identify the narrator of the text
- Infer and deduce information from the text
- Empathize with the main character
- Skim the text to retrieve information

Engage

Ask students to have mind maps ready for **conflict** that they prepared for homework at the end of Lesson 2. Tell them to reflect on the 3 types of conflict they mapped.

Tell students that in this lesson they will be looking at the character of Balagaan and the three types of conflict he faces in these chapters.

(Remind students of the concepts of first- and third-person narration and explain that *The Magpie and the Snake* is written using the third person omniscient narrator* with Balagaan and Yirinyin acting as the central characters (protagonists) of the novel. Although the novel is narrated by this third person, we see everything through Balagaan and Yirinyin's eyes.

* What Is an **Omniscient Narrator**?

An omniscient narrator is 'all-knowing'. They know what is happening at all times and know the thoughts and feelings of all the characters in the story.)

Explore

Remind students that, as readers, we use the active reading strategies **infer and deduce**. We deduce information from the evidence we

find in a text (for example, if someone is nasty to a character and the character gets upset or angry, we might deduce that the character who made them upset meant to hurt them). We make an inference by reading between the lines and guessing that something is probably true, based on what we know (in this case, we might deduce that the person who upset them is an enemy). Read Chapters 2 and 3 as a class.

Using **OHT 3**, model deduction and inference for students. Then split them into pairs or small groups, and ask them to complete **WS 3**, finding evidence in the text to support each statement either implicitly or explicitly. Take feedback from each pair or group.

Transform

Students will now use the information they have gathered about Balagaan and the other characters to produce a visual character profile for Balagaan.

They will need to include the following information:

- a drawing of Balagaan
- Balagaan's likes and dislikes
- his friends
- his family

Students should be creative in completing their profile.

Review and reflect

Once they have completed their profiles, invite students to share them with the class. Discuss Balagaan's experiences thus far. How well do students feel they would have managed in a similar situation?

Balagaan's father calls him 'Balagaan' which is Bundjalung for 'hero'. Ask students to reflect on how Balagaan is shaping up to be a hero.

Homework

Students read Chapters 4 and 5.

OHT 3

Infer and deduce

The two boys stood facing each other, the atmosphere tense **like** an uneasy calm before a storm.

The **simile** captures the hostility of the boys towards each other.

“**Stop it!**” Gawngan strode up and stood between them.

To Balagaan’s surprise, Janguy’s son put up his hands and backed away.

“Okay, okay. No need to get so cranky. We were just having fun.”

“You’re bullying someone, is what you’re doing,” said Gawngan.

Janguy’s son pouted. “What do you know?”

Balagaan could hear the shame in his voice.

“Dumb **dubay**,” he muttered. He shoved Gawngan to the ground.

The use of some Bundjalung words amongst the English ones slowly introduces the reader to Aboriginal language.

Anger blazed as hot as coals in Balagaan’s heart. He moved towards Janguy’s son.

Janguy’s son must have sensed the danger. He stepped back, snatched up a broken spear shaft from the ground and flicked it back and forth.

Dangan dishonorably picks up a weapon to use against Balagaan to give him an advantage in a potential fight.

It had a sharp point where the shaft had snapped.

Balagaan pulled his head back, just in time. The sharp point whizzed past his nose. Balagaan stepped towards him.

Gawngan’s dialogue is short and sharp. The use of the imperative verb combined with the exclamation mark reveals a strength in her words that she matches with her actions when she boldly stands between the boys.

Dangan’s use of derogatory and sexist language in his dialogue combined to his strong physical reaction shown in the verb ‘shoved’ reveals he is a bully.

The simile reveals Balagaan’s protective nature as moves towards Dangan to defend Gawngan from further injury.

Although Balagaan could be injured by the sharp object, he steps bravely towards Dangan.

“Uh uh,” said Janguy’s son, flicking the spear back and forth.

Balagaan saw there was no way past it. The stick moved **like** an angry snake, rearing on its tail, whipping its head back and forth.

Jamaalgaan lumbered to his feet and stood beside Janguy’s son. He **glared** at Balagaan but Balagaan read something else in his eyes as well; he thought it might have been respect.

Balagaan saw it first. He saw the flash of black and white as the magpie swooped Janguy’s son. He heard its wings flapping and he heard the crack as its beak pecked Janguy’s son hard on the head. It sounded like a rock had struck his skull.

“Ow!” Janguy whirled at the bird and waved the spear shaft at it.

The magpie lifted into the air.

Janguy’s son rubbed his scalp where the bird had struck.

He looked at his hand. His fingers were slick with blood.

The magpie squawked a warning.

Janguy’s son looked up to see the magpie twist in mid-air to come diving towards him again. “Run!”

Janguy’s son and Jamaalgaan turned their heels and fled along the beach towards the safety of the humpies.

The magpie flew after them, swooping and clacking at them as they ran.

Dangan flicks the spear expertly so that it appears to move like his totem. His connection with his totem allows him to extend himself into other objects.

The emotive word ‘glared’ reveals Jamaalgaan’s hostility to Balagaan but there is the respect there too after Balagaan defeated him.

Dangan’s dialogue emphasizes his lack of courage as he runs away from the magpie rather than face it.

Balagaan’s totem chases Dangan and Jamaalgaan symbolizing the magpie’s strong connection with Balagaan.

Worksheet 3

What we learn about Balagaan's character

In the table below are some of the things we learn about Balagaan and the other characters in Chapters 3–4. Go through the chapters carefully, and find evidence for each of these statements, then fill the quotations into the table.

What we learn about Balagaan	Evidence from the text
Dangan and Balagaan are enemies	
Balagaan has strong feelings for Gawngan and is very protective of her	
Dangan's totem gives him power	
Dangan is cowardly	
Balagaan's totem watches over him	
Dangan is a bully	
Jamaalgan has honour	
Gawngan is brave	
Dangan does not fight fair	
Balagaan is brave	

LESSON 4

Focus: Chapters 5–6 Setting

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Empathise with characters
- Understand the effect of setting on atmosphere and tension
- Skim and scan text to retrieve information
- Develop descriptive writing skills

Engage

Students are to read Chapters 5–6. Check their comprehension by asking the following questions:

- What happens in these chapters?
- Which new setting is introduced?
- What happens in Balagaan's dream and what do you think it means?
- What do we learn about Balagaan at the tree?
- Who is Nuree?

Explore

As a class, read Chapters 5 and 6.

Then tell students that they will be taking a guided tour of the Nyangbal summer campsite near the creek. Ask them to close their eyes and imagine that they are in the camp. What might they be feeling when he lays down beside the fire? Or walks through the forest at night? What is the view like from the top of the midden? (contentment near the fire, uncertainty as he walks through the forest, thrilled when he meets with Gawngan, excitement and fear as he runs along the midden, sadness at Gawngan leaving and at having to leave the summer camp). Tell them to imagine they are running through the campsite in the morning and scramble up the tall midden. Ask them to imagine they are running along the gritty track, and that with every step they feel more nervous about getting caught. The ground is sharp beneath their feet.

What can they hear? The creek and campsite and midden are filled with Aboriginal people laughing and chattering as they go about their chores and make the long journey along the midden track. What will they see? They might see lots of activity, semi-naked men and women; dingoes; people packing up their campsites; women standing in the reeds; boys jumping off rocks; boys catching fish in the fish traps; and the sparkling creek. They might see campsites all packed up, like Gawngan's family's site; men, carrying spears or other weapons. What will they feel and smell? For example: the sun will be very hot on their skin; they will be able to smell food from the campfires, sea air, as well as the less pleasant smell of excrement. Allow time between these descriptions for students to imagine their surroundings properly.

Then, when they have had a chance to let it sink in, ask the class to open their eyes and write down how it felt to be there. Hand out **WS 4**. Students should use this worksheet to record what they experienced during the 'tour'.

Then read the rest of Chapter 6. Are students surprised by Bolim's treatment of Balagaan and how he reacts?

Transform

Students will now use their notes, together with the picture in their imagination, to write a description of the campsite and its surrounds. They will need to write at least two paragraphs and should use adjectives and adverbs to reflect what they see, hear, touch and feel, as well as figurative language if they can. Support them in making their writing as rich as possible, and in including all their senses.

Review and reflect

Reflect on the impression they have of the campsite and lifestyle of the Nyangbal people at this point in the novel. How do they think Balagaan feels about where he lives?

Homework

Students draw a map of the Nyangbal campsite.

Worksheet 4

The Nyangbal Campsite – building a description

Use this table to record what you could see, hear, feel, smell and taste during the tour of the campsite; also add information about what you think Balagaan is thinking and feeling at this point in the novel. Remember to use descriptive adjectives and adverbs.

Things to consider	Notes	Description
sight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Huge midden</i> • <i>People – families from all over</i> • <i>The river</i> 	<i>'He past one group of people... helping each other up the steep slope of the midden. He could see patches of fresh crab shells, prawn husks, fish bones and oyster and pipi shells...'</i>
sound		
smell/taste/ touch		
Balagaan's thoughts and feelings		

LESSON 5

Focus: Chapters 7–9
Character development

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Develop empathy with characters
- Use role-play to explore emotional conflicts
- Skim and scan text to retrieve information
- Infer information from the text about characters and events
- Track character development

Engage

Ask students to take out their maps of the Nyangbal campsite. Have students share their maps and create a comprehensive class map of the Nyangbal campsite.

Explore

Read Chapter 7.

Balagaan and his clan journey along a songline through the Big Scrub to a seasonal campsite. As they replenish food sources along the way, Bolim singles out Balagaan to reprimand him for not being mindful of the lore. The boys talk about an upcoming initiation ceremony and Balagaan sees his totem, the magpie, and senses it's trying to warn him about something. Ask students what they think of this scene, and why Steve Trotter may have chosen to include it in the novel. Then read them the writer's comments from page 7 of the Reading Guide, which explain why he included the scene. Discuss this briefly as a class.

Then split students into pairs and ask them to role-play Balagaan and Yirinyin talking about what the magpie might be trying to warn him about. Balagaan will have mixed feelings, and Yirinyin will be curious – both characters should try to explain their opinions about what the magpie is trying to tell Balagaan.

Transform

Students should then read Chapters 8 and 9. Explain that, as they read, you would like them to notice how Trotter shifts from Balagaan's point of view to Yirinyin's point of view to narrate the story.

Since Balagaan was sent to live with another mob, Yirinyin becomes the narrator. Try to get students to consider why Trotter has done this. What purpose did the sending of Balagaan away serve for the telling of the story? (allows Yirinyin to become the narrator, and reinforces the adversity that Balagaan faces from his culture). Yirinyin described the way the Nyangbal Aboriginal people lived on the land, companion planting crops and animals, creating fenceless enclosures and using sophisticated hunting techniques that allowed them to cull prey for food and to help the kangaroo mob thrive. What tells students that these practices were highly sustainable practices? Have students consider how novels use structural features, like a shift in narrator, to manipulate time. Can they think of other structural features that novels use to manipulate time?

This would be an appropriate time to work with a guided group. **WS 5** provides guidance on the format a guided session could take.

Once students have read the chapters and considered the changes, ask them to consider the lessons Balagaan himself is learning. These will include the fact that he is isolated, and that is a visitor living with another clan who speaks a different language, who have different customs. This move was intended to reinforce his commitment to the lore and the values of his clan. However, it could also make him more independent and empowered.

Review and reflect

The Nyangbal people's farming and hunting practices serve to educate readers about the sustainable way of life of Aboriginal people in Australia. While they do not drive the plot of the novel, they are an important inclusion, as they debunk the myth that Aboriginal people were primitive hunters and gatherers, and they reveal the damage done to the environment and the Aboriginal people's way of life since the British settled Australia. Ask students to reflect further on the current situation in Australia. Are we conserving our food sources and other resources for future generations? What is Trotter trying to communicate here? Why did he choose Yirinyin as narrator? Is it because Yirinyin is Balagaan's friend, or is it something more unique about Yirinyin's character?

Homework

Students to write a journal entry explaining how we could live more sustainably today.

Worksheet 5

Guided reading plan: Lesson 5

Teaching intention

To consolidate the skill of using context to deduce the meaning of new vocabulary.
To consolidate inference and deduction.

Introduction

Remind students that they will be looking at Chapters 8 and 9 and the changes that have taken place in the narrator and the novel's focus on sustainability.

Strategy check

- Check that students understand how they should complete the task. Check that they understand that they are to think about evidence in the story that shows how life was for the Nyangbal people before the British arrived.
- Check that they realize that they will need to re-read parts of the story to find evidence.
- Check that students know they will need to make deductions about the impact of the British settlement of Australia.

Independent reading

Students read Chapters 8 and 9. Guide them through the reading, checking their understanding in relation to the task and supporting them as they consider the sustainable practices used by the Nyangbal people. When they have finished reading, they should prepare a list of these practices.

Return to the text

Ask groups to share at least one of their points and discuss these as a class. What do they think Australia might be like today if no-one else settled here?

Review

Ask the group whether they feel more confident in understanding what life was like before the British settled in Australia.

LESSON 6

Focus: Chapter 10
Humour/Plot development

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Develop empathy with characters
- Explore humour as a narrative technique
- Infer and deduce information from the text
- Develop interview and reporting skills
- Develop listening skills
- Act in role as one of the characters

Engage

Start with students' lists of how we could do things more sustainably and harmoniously today. As in previous lessons, make this a short speaking and listening task where they can discuss their decisions with a partner.

When this activity has been completed, ask students what an interview is, and ask them to come up with some examples. The main ones they will mention should be job interviews and news interviews. Ask them what these have in common (in both cases, the interviewer tries to get as much information as they can from the interviewee by crafting good questions, and then listening to the answers and following these up with more questions).

Explore

In this chapter, Trotter contrasts Aboriginal values with European values. Trotter paints a picture of Aboriginal people living harmoniously with each other and the environment, while he suggests Westerners, like the British, live in **conflict** with other cultures and see the land as something to exploit*. The author foreshadows this difference in values could lead to a clash between the two groups in the future. Read Chapter 10 with the class. This chapter deals with **local conflict** and the possibility of **global conflict**. It is a paradoxical chapter, in that Trotter makes the Aboriginal people the protagonists and the British the antagonists in the story. Yirinyin and the other Nyangbal men observe English speaking explorers as foreigners in a foreign environment. Steve Trotter uses humour, anthropomorphism, metaphor and simile to make the unfamiliar familiar and the familiar unfamiliar.

Once the class has read the chapter, ask them to discuss the idea of making English speaking people the foreigners. What do they think about Trotter's decision to do this?

Did it help you to understand what it must have been like for the Aboriginal people who saw us as hostile invaders rather than respectful immigrants?

Ask them to look at the devices the author uses to depict a harrowing situation. What examples can they find? What is the effect of these language techniques? What does it suggest about the Aboriginal people and their hope to live peacefully in the future, the way they had for thousands of years before the British arrived? How does Irindilli's belief that he has been bitten by something rather than shot create a sense of suspense for a future encounter between the Nyangbal people and the newcomers?

Transform

Tell students to imagine that a journalist has decided to interview the crew in the longboat about their encounter with the Nyangbal people OR the Nyangbal people about their encounter with the newcomers for your magazine, and that they will be role-playing the interview. Divide students into groups of four. Two of them will play the interviewees, and one will be the journalist. The fourth group member will either take notes during the interview or, if you have access to a video or audio device, you can record the interview. Before performing the role-play, the whole group should work together to come up with a set of questions for the journalist to ask, and to consider the answers that the interviewees might give to the questions. Remind them to use open questions (especially the 5Ws) and to listen to the interviewees' answers instead of just waiting to ask the next question.

Review and reflect

Ask students to reflect on the experiences of interviewing and being interviewed. Did they learn anything about the British and their perspective of Aboriginal people and the British people's view of the colonization of Australia by hot-seating their characters OR did they learn anything about the Aboriginal people's perspective of the newcomers? How well did they think the interviews themselves worked – did the interviewer ask good, open questions, listen to answers and build on them? Each student should come up with one thing that they feel went well, and one that they would improve.

Inform students that they will be turning the interviews into a magazine article for homework. **WS 6** provides them with all the information they need to get started.

Homework

Students write their magazine articles.

*(Oxford Dictionary online: 'make full use of and derive benefit from (a resource); make use of (a situation) in a way considered unfair or underhand').

Worksheet 6

Magazine article

Imagine that you are a journalist. You have interviewed either the British crew about their encounter with the Aboriginal people or the Nyangbal people about their encounter with the British on the creek at Ballina, and you are now going to turn the interview into an article for your magazine. You need to make sure that it is informative and interesting.

GETTING STARTED

- A good place to start with any journalistic writing is the 5Ws:
 - **WHEN** the action took place
 - **WHAT** happened
 - **WHERE** it happened
 - **WHO** was involved in the story
 - **WHY** it happened.
- Write a strong headline and key opening sentence – remember you will need to hook your readers in!
- You will be writing in the third person. This means that you will need to transform what the interviewees told you in their own words into the third person, using pronouns such as he/she/they/them.
- Include at least one direct quote from one of your interviewees – either something that they say in the book, or something that was said in your interview.
- Decide how many paragraphs you will need to tell your story, and what order these should be in. You should include a brief description of the interviewees' movements that morning leading up to the encounter and a summary of what the interviewees were doing in the week or so before the encounter at Ballina (remember to facts like, the British had been exploring the east coast of Australia, looking for a large river entrance, or that the Nyangbal people had recently moved to their Autumn camp, etc.).
- Think of some **connectives** you could use to 'glue' your paragraphs together.
- Remember that your writing will show how well you know the story and characters in *The Magpie and the Snake*, so refer to the text to help you where necessary.
- A good writer always proofreads their work!

LESSON 7

Focus: Chapter 11
Eyewitness/Plot development

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Continue to develop empathy with characters
- Relate the text to its historical context
- Explore how the author handles a difficult episode
- Develop report writing skills
- Work as a group

Engage

Ask students to form pairs, or groups of 3, to talk about the encounter between the Nyangbal people and the newcomers. This is an example of **local conflict**. Students share how they think the Nyangbal people will react to the arrival of the newcomers.

Ask for feedback from students on their magazine article writing. What did they find easiest and most difficult about this task?

Explore

Read Chapter 11.

Once the class has read the chapter, ask students to consider why Trotter has included this scene in the novel (answers might include: the writer reveals the different values of the Yirraalii and the Nyangbal people by contrasting the way the Aboriginal people approach the conflict; whereas the Yirraalii are hostile and reactive, the Nyangbal people are restrained and proactive. The author asks the reader: who is more civilized? The people who use technologically superior weapons to attack first and ask questions later or the peaceful people who observe and use diplomacy rather than violence to settle disputes?).

This chapter provides a post-colonial perspective of the British settlement of the country by exploring how the Aboriginal people perceived the spread of the British across their lands. Trotter encourages his readers to reconsider the colonial perspective taught to earlier generations of Australians who had been taught that Australia was inhabited by primitive people, simple hunters and gatherers, living examples of prehistoric cave men and women from our distant past. Trotter challenges the cultural bias within this interpretation and contends that it was propaganda used to legitimize the British invasion of Australia.

This biased belief about Aboriginal Australians would later form the basis of a colonialist Governor determining Australia to be a Terra Nullius, 'a land of nothing', to validate the British government's colonization of the country.

This view painted the British as romantic discoverers and pioneers, who opened-up the country and educated the primitive Indigenous inhabitants to show them a more civilized way of living.

Ask students to look again at what Trotter has written in Chapter 10 and discuss if they think this is true.

Transform

Ask students to think about what else they might include in the magazine and write down a few ideas. Then inform them that they will be creating a four-page magazine themselves. Divide them into groups to form small editorial committees and give them the task of first agreeing on a name for the magazine, and then coming up with a plan for the content. They should fill these in on the flat plan on **WS7**. This content should include one of the articles from the previous lesson but could also include accounts of Balagaan's experience in the old camp, as well as the experiences of the other characters. Students can be creative about content (poetry would work well, for example) but should consider space – they will probably need to aim for six articles at the most. These can be assigned to pairs or individual students to write.

Remind them that magazines usually have a front cover, but that a newsletter, for example, only has a masthead. They should consider what to do with this space.

Review and reflect

Ask students to reflect on the process of coming up with the content for their magazines. How did they decide what information should be included, and what should be left out?

Homework

Students could complete their magazines as a project or write their articles for homework and finish putting the magazines together in another lesson.

Worksheet 7

Magazine flat plan

FRONT COVER (PAGE 1)

INSIDE FRONT COVER (PAGE 2)

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INSIDE BACK COVER (PAGE 3)

BACK COVER (PAGE 4)

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LESSON 8

Focus: Chapter 12
Dilemma and resolution

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Explore and examine their empathy with characters
- Discuss a dilemma faced by a character
- Assess parallels and differences between characters
- Give a personal response to a difficult situation
- Develop their public speaking skills

Engage

Students to finalise their magazines. How did students feel carrying out the activity? Was it better when they had a choice about which parts of the novel to write about, or when the choice was made for them? Did the way they selected their stories change as the lessons went on? Did they make their decisions based on practical or emotional factors? Ask them to reflect on whether they have gained any insight into the British settlement of Australia and/or Aboriginal culture.

Explore

Read Chapter 12.

In this chapter, Balagaan returns to the Nyangbal summer campsite during the Oyster Festival. He is now an initiated man. Aboriginal people have gathered along the creek from all over the country for the big festival. Balagaan reunites with his cousins, Irindilli and Yirinyin, and Gawngan too. While he feasts with cousins, he hears a row and gets involved in a physical encounter with Dangan where he learns that Dangan and Gawngan are married. Despairing what to do, Yirinyin suggests he visit the Clever Man for guidance. This decision is supported by his elder, Bolim.

Inform students that they will be exploring the inner conflict in the character of Balagaan by holding a debate. The inner conflict he experiences is caused by his strong feelings of loyalty to the lore and the customs of his people and the intense love he feels for Gawngan. Students will explore Balagaan's inner struggle between his loyalty to the lore and his love of Gawngan.

First, divide students into groups and ask them to discuss the issue, using the cards on **WS 8** to start them off (they may also add their own arguments) – each group should get one of each of these cards and discuss both perspectives.

When they have done so, write the following statement on the board: 'Balagaan has the right to be with Gawngan, even though it means he might break the lore.'

Ask students to line up according to how strongly they agree with the statement; from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Divide the line into three groups and ask the groups from either end of the line to act as speakers and the middle group to be the judges who will weigh up the arguments to help Balagaan make his decision as to whether or not he can be with Gawngan.

Transform

Give the groups some time to work out their arguments and assign each of them to a different speaker.

Begin the debate. Each team member gets a set time to argue one point and then the turn moves to the other side. Students in the judging group can ask questions. At the end, this group can vote to select the winning side.

Review and reflect

Reflect on the issues raised during the debate and elicit a personal response from students. How free do they think Balagaan and Gawngan will be to make their own choice?

Also reflect on the success of the debate itself. How could this have been improved?

Homework

Students complete the quick quiz on this chapter on page 13 of the Reading Guide.

Worksheet 8

Discussion cards

Balagaan is right to plan to be with Gawngan because they are in love.

AGREE

- Balagaan and Gawngan have been in love since they were children and she doesn't love Dangan.
- If Balagaan doesn't act soon, he will no longer have the opportunity to make a plan to be with Gawngan as she will return with Dangan to his clan's land.
- The situation with Dangan was unbearable and Gawngan was in love with Balagaan. It would be best for her to leave him immediately and start a new life with Balagaan.
- Maybe there is something in the lore Balagaan doesn't know about that might let him be with Gawngan without breaking the lore.

Balagaan is right to plan to be with Gawngan because they are in love.

DISAGREE

- Leaving Dangan is unthinkable. Gawngan would be breaking the lore. Her elopement with Balagaan would bring great shame to herself, her family and her clan.
- If they eloped it would bring great shame to Balagaan, his family and his family will be disgraced.
- Her and Balagaan could be killed for breaking the lore.
- There is still hope that Gawngan's relationship with Dangan could improve, but only if she stops seeing Balagaan.

Balagaan is right to plan to be with Gawngan because they are in love.

AGREE

- Balagaan and Gawngan have been in love since they were children and she doesn't love Dangan.
- If Balagaan doesn't act soon, he will no longer have the opportunity to make a plan to be with Gawngan as she will return with Dangan to his clan's land.
- The situation with Dangan was unbearable and Gawngan was in love with Balagaan. It would be best for her to leave him immediately and start a new life with Balagaan.
- Maybe there is something in the lore Balagaan doesn't know about that might let him be with Gawngan without breaking the lore.

Balagaan is right to plan to be with Gawngan because they are in love.

DISAGREE

- Leaving Dangan is unthinkable. Gawngan would be breaking the lore. Her elopement with Balagaan would bring great shame to herself, her family and her clan.
- If they eloped it would bring great shame to Balagaan, his family and his family will be disgraced.
- Her and Balagaan could be killed for breaking the lore.
- There is still hope that Gawngan's relationship with Dangan could improve, but only if she stops seeing Balagaan.

LESSON 9

Focus: Chapters 13 and 14
Perspective

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Assess how characters have developed and changed
- Explore different perspectives in the novel
- Write empathetically as one of the characters
- Examine atmosphere and mood in these chapters

Engage

'*The Magpie and the Snake*' appropriates the traditional Bundjalung characters, Balugan and Gaungan*, meaning 'hero' and 'heroine', and has strong intertextual links to Bundjalung Dreamtime stories thousands of years old.

The purpose of these ancient living stories was educational. They were told to young people to help them make good decisions.

Students complete a sequencing activity based on the stories of *Balagaan and the Tournament* AND *Balagaan and Gawngan Elope*. These stories can be located at the back of the book, after the Glossary.

Cut **WS 9** into strips and ask them to work in pairs to put them in the right order.

Then ask them to reflect on how these stories have been important to the novel's story so far.

In Chapter 13, the Clever Man tells Balagaan he will be tested but must act within the lore if he wants to be with Gawngan. Balagaan's tests will involve conflict and he will face the greatest adversity he has ever experienced. Think about your favourite stories. What type of adversity did the heroes face? What type of conflict was involved: inner, local or global? What qualities helped the hero to succeed? What was the purpose of the story? Do you have heroes or heroines (can be from movies, sports, etc.) who have influenced you and helped you overcome adversity and guided you through conflict?

Explore

Students read Chapters 13–14.

When they have done so, ask them to reflect on the Tree Climbing event. How Balagaan's

climbing the tree and defeating Dangan would have been out of character at the start of the novel.

Students should also revisit Chapters 2 to 5. Dangan is the antagonist in this story. He is Balagaan's foil. His character creates a central conflict for Balagaan, who now fears that Gawngan is in danger. In Dangan's chapters, what do students think is the worst thing that he has experienced? Some might feel that it was his father publicly chastising him and being sent from the bumaalii ground or having Balagaan embarrass him at the markets. Whatever they think, it is clear that Dangan has a huge role to play in the moral of 'The Magpie and the Snake'.

Transform

Traditional Bundjalung stories play an important role in the novel. They form the basis for the plot and give readers an insight into the rich oral stories of Aboriginal people through their inclusion.

Students are encouraged to research a local Dreaming story. If the Elders grant permission and, if appropriate, they could write it in their books.

(Students may like to use this story for the adaptation task on worksheet 11).

Review and reflect

Students should read the letters to one another in pairs. How similar are the perspectives they have shared? Give them the opportunity to proofread one another's work and make suggestions for improvement.

Homework

Students redraft their letters to take account of their partner's suggestions.

*The spelling of Balagaan and Gawngan used in Trotter's book reflects the spelling preferred by the Bundjalung NEST language advisory group within the NSW Department of Education.

FACT: Did you know that Bundjalung was an oral language before the British arrived? There was no written form.

Extension

Students can write in their journal why they think it has been so tricky for the clans from the Bundjalung Nation to agree on the English spelling of Bundjalung words that can be taught as the Bundjalung language in schools.

Worksheet 9

'Balagaan and the Tournament' AND 'Balagaan and Gawngan Elope'

Some people believe the name Ballina is derived from an Aboriginal term.
The father changed into a kangaroo, his 'other self' in the Dreaming, to gain speed.
The gaungan and balugan had been promised in marriage to others.
The father caught the couple and forgave them.
The gaungan's father chased after the two lovers with his hunting dogs.
Legends tell of a balugan, a hero, who journeys to Ballina.
Bullen-bullen means tournament.
A sacred spring at Lismore features in a Bundjalung legend.
The tournaments were often referred to in Aboriginal mythology.
It is believed tournaments were held in Ballina.
The gaungan and balugan ran away.
A balugan hopes to try his fighting prowess in a tournament at Ballina.
The legend involves a gaungan (heroine) and balugan (hero) who fell in love
The father's giant leaps caused springs to arise wherever he landed.

LESSON 10

Focus: Chapters 15 and 16
Plot development: the climax and resolution

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Infer information from the text about characters and events
- Discuss a dilemma faced by a character
- Make predictions about character and plot
- Act in role as one of the characters
- Understand the writer's purpose in writing the novel

Engage

Introduce the term 'lore' and ask students if they know what it means and how it's different to Australian law (Australian law is a set of complex rules and regulations created by the government to maintain order and to safeguard people and their property. It is the government's responsibility to ensure the rules are followed. The law is enforced by authorities like the police and courts. Although our court system appears to be for everyone, it is heavily biased towards the wealthy. It is very expensive to go to court and only specially trained people, called lawyers, are allowed to represent you and your case before a judge. The person with the most money usually 'wins').

Aboriginal lore is quite different. It is a collection of principles, added to over thousands of years, that help people understand themselves and their place in the world. The lore explains the importance of maintaining the connection between people, the land, animals, seasons and ancestors. It is the individual's responsibility to ensure they follow the lore. The lore is instilled in each person in the community from the day they are born. It is passed on from generation to generation through the stories, traditions, customs and spiritual beliefs of the community.

Unlike Australian law, which is written down and maintains the order that the government want to impose, Aboriginal lore is passed on orally and explains the order of the world and our place in it.

Explore

Read Chapters 15 and 16.
These chapters reflect the events of Chapters 1

and 2 in the book and again raise the question of the importance of following the lore. Balagaan accepts he has broken the lore and dutifully faces his punishment, unlike Dangan's father and his clan at the beginning of the book who defy the lore and challenge the very order of the world itself. Trotter deliberately creates a juxtaposition between these scenes to highlight the importance in Aboriginal society of acting properly.

The magpie, Balagaan's totem, comes to his aid when his faith and courage are tested. The magpie is a natural symbol that he takes strength from and that encourages him to stand fast to his beliefs and to trust in the outcome.

Remind students of the Bundjalung stories at the back of the book. In one, Balagaan and Gawngan elope, are caught by Gawngan's father and are forgiven. Knowing there are strict rules around marriage in traditional Bundjalung culture, ask students why they think a potential lore-breaker, like Balagaan, is made the hero of the story rather than the villain.

In groups, ask students to make a list of the different outcomes for what might happen to Balagaan and Gawngan, and what might still happen to them. Students should look at a range of different outcomes.

Transform

Students will now role-play the talk between Dangan, and his family, and the elders to arrange a suitable compensation that Dangan is happy with in exchange to annul his marriage to Gawngan.

They should consider the following:

- What material contributions Gawngan would make to Dangan and his family's life
- How Dangan feels about Gawngan
- How Dangan's reputation might be affected by an annulment
- How Dangan's reputation might be affected by demanding too much compensation out of spite

Review and reflect

Remind students of Steve Trotter's dedication at the front of the book: 'for the Bullinaa mob and for all Australians living today and tomorrow'. Having read the whole novel, what do they think he means? Do they think it is an appropriate dedication?

Homework

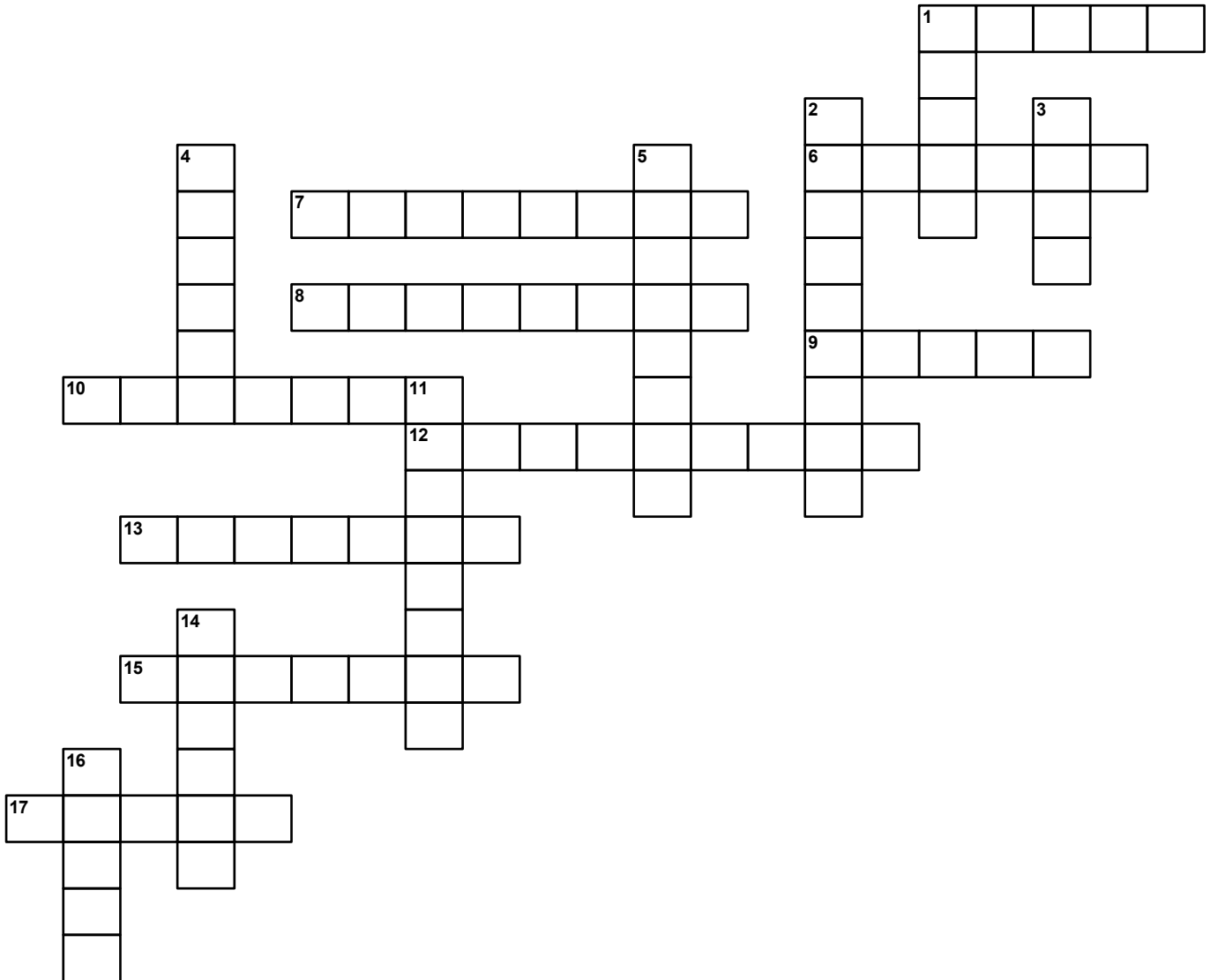
Students can complete the crossword quiz on **WS 10** to revise the Bundjalung words used in the novel.

Worksheet 10

Crossword

'The Magpie and the Snake'

Complete the crossword in Bundjalung. (If you get stuck, use the Glossary at the back of the book).



Across

- [1] No
 [6] Tree
 [7] Kangaroo
 [8] Place of seafood and fish
 [9] The shield Balagaan uses to defend himself in the spear ordeal
 [10] Boy
 [12] the newcomers; the British, white people
 [13] A Clever Man; a man with magical powers
 [15] The traditional Bundjalung female hero
 [17] Girl

Down

- [1] Yes; certainly; of course
 [2] Sacred site or place
 [3] A small shellfish like a cockle or clam
 [4] A bully who is married to Gawngan; Balagaan's enemy
 [5] The traditional Bundjalung male hero
 [11] The Ballina mob
 [14] Dark-skinned man
 [16] Aboriginal person in the north coast of NSW

LESSON 11

Focus: Whole novel
Overview/Adaptation

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Identify the structure and organization of text
- Plan and discuss how to relay the same story through a different media
- Consider audience and purpose

Engage

Look at **WS 11a**. Students should work in pairs to order the key events sequentially. They can leave the third column blank for the moment.

Explore

Tell students to imagine that they have been commissioned by a children's book publisher to rewrite Balagaan's story for a younger audience. Hand out **WS 11b**, which is their brief, and gives them some starting points and things to remember.

Then, working in groups, students should work through some of the questions – what age group they are writing for and what this means, what form their writing will take, and finally which of the events they should include and which they should leave out. They can use **WS 11a** to add ticks and crosses to the key events and help them keep track of which they will be including and which they will not.

Transform

Give students time to write their adaptations. Some students may need support, but once they have the idea, it is an opportunity for them to have fun with the story and be creative in the way they tell it. Depending on how much time you have, you might want to allow for different media, such as comic strips, a short play, a poem, etc.

If they are really struggling, you could instead ask them to create a film adaptation. In this case, students can create a storyboard and also ask them to come up with a cast list from famous actors and actresses to play all the main roles, and some suggestions for the soundtrack.

Review and reflect

Ask students whether working on an adaptation has given them further insight into the writer's process. Have they learned anything about the sort of decisions writers and editors make every day? What was their favourite part of the whole novel?

Also ask them to think back and reflect on the predictions they made in Lesson 1. Were any of them correct?

Homework

Ask students to look at covers, using the activity on page 14 of the Reading Guide. They can use this to design their own cover for the novel (or for their children's adaptation).

Worksheet 11a

Key events

The Magpie and the Snake is a fast-paced, dramatic novel. The plot is driven by key events which change life for Balagaan.

Here are some of the key events in the story, but they have been muddled up. Decide what order they should be in and write the number in the middle column.

Key event	Order number	Include?
Balagaan wins the Tree Climbing Event		
Balagaan faces the spear ordeal		
Balagaan learns Gawngan is married		
Balagaan and Gawngan form a union at the tree		
Balagaan is sent away		
Balagaan stops the Bumaalii	1	
Balagaan defeats Jamaalgan and faces Dangan on the beach.		
Balagaan saves face for Dangan after the Spear Ordeal		
Balagaan kisses Gawngan for the first time		
Balagaan visits the Clever Man		
Balagaan shames Dangan at the Bumaalii		

Worksheet 11b

Author's brief



Magpie Publishers

AUTHOR'S BRIEF: THE MAGPIE AND THE SNAKE CHILDREN'S STORY

You have been asked to adapt *The Magpie and the Snake** into a book for much younger children, so that teachers can use it to teach their students about Australia's deeper history.

However, you will need to remember that younger children are a very different audience than the ones you are used to writing for. First, decide:

- What age group are you writing for?
- What factors will you need to take into account for this age group? (For example, reading level, how appropriate some material is, etc.)
- How will you present your story? It could be as a picture book, or as a dramatic reading, for example. Do you have any other ideas for how you would like to adapt it?

TIME TO GET WRITING!

- First, decide which events you might leave out of your story and why.
- Which are the most important events – make a list of what you have to include.
- Decide how you might end the story.

*If students have been granted permission to use the Dreaming story they could transform it into a book for young readers instead.

LESSON 12

Focus: Whole novel
Review/Reflect

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Make predictions about character and plot
- Summarize information
- Work as a group to solve a problem
- Review their learning

Engage

Write on the board the word 'sequel'. Do students know what it means? Compile a list of sequels from film and literature. Do students believe the first book or film is always the best? This used to be a common perception, but for the Harry Potter generation they may feel that it is no longer the case. When do they think there should be a sequel to something, and when is it better to leave the original alone?

Ask them to consider whether they think that Steve Trotter had a sequel in mind when he was writing *The Magpie and the Snake*. Is everything resolved at the end? Or does he provide some closure, but with a whole new set of unanswered questions?

Explore

If students are not already aware, inform them that, in fact, Steve Trotter did write not just one but two sequels to *The Magpie and the Snake*. Without referring to the blurbs at the back of the Reading Guide, students work in groups to map out a sequel to *The Magpie and the Snake*. They should answer the following questions:

- What challenge might Gawngan face and why?
- Will Gawngan succeed or not? If she does what will she get? If she doesn't what will happen?
- Will the newcomers return? If they do, will it be the same Yirraalii or others?
- What might cause conflict between the newcomers and the Nyangbal people?
- Do the Nyangbal people stay in Bullinaa, or do they leave to go somewhere else?
- Are there any new characters introduced along the way?

Transform

Remind students that the blurb at the back of a book is an important way to sell the book, as it will grab the reader's interest. As noted on page

A good blurb will:

- give information about setting and/or main theme
- introduce the main character or characters
- spark the reader's interest and curiosity.

Students write a blurb for their sequel to *The Magpie and the Snake*. As they do so, they should bear in mind that some potential readers may not have read the first book, so they shouldn't assume prior knowledge when writing about the book.

However, they may wish to include the information that this is a sequel, so that fans of the first book know that this is the next chapter in the story.

Review and reflect

Hand out the reading assessment on **WS 12**.

Ask students to think about all the reading strategies they have used during their study of the novel – which assessment focuses do they feel they have made progress with?

Homework

Students write the opening paragraph to their sequel.

Worksheet 12

Self-assessment sheet

Reading skills and strategies	You practised this when:	I do this well	I can do this sometimes	I need to practise this
Understand, describe, select or retrieve information, events or ideas from texts and use quotation and reference to text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You did this when you gathered information about key characters and events as the novel progressed. You did this when you wrote articles for the magazine. You did this when you wrote your adaptation. 			
Deduce, infer or interpret information, events or ideas from texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You did this when you inferred ideas about characters in the novel and how they developed. You did this when you role-played characters. You did this when you explored how to tell the same story through different media. 			
Identify and comment on the structure and organization of texts, including grammatical and presentational features at text level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You did this when you looked at how the author ordered events in the novel. You did this when you predicted how the plot would develop. You did this when you thought about the third-person narrator. 			
Explain and comment on writers' uses of language, including grammatical and literary features at word and sentence level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You did this when you analysed the writer's use of humour to manage a difficult scene. You did this when you worked out the meaning of unfamiliar words using the context. 			
Identify and comment on writers' purposes and viewpoints and the overall effect of the text on the reader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You did this when you considered why the author wrote the novel and which ideas he was trying to pass on. You did this when you considered the writer's use of setting. 			
Relate texts to their social, cultural and historical contexts and literary traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You did this when you gathered information about Aboriginal culture. You did this when you contrasted your own life to that of Balagaan. You did this when you considered what might have happened to Balagaan after the novel concluded. 			