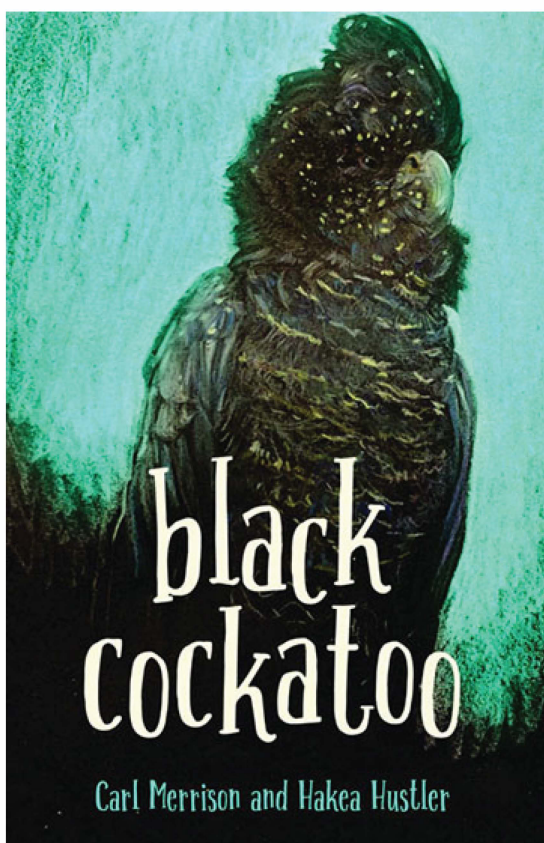


## Black Cockatoo

### Exploring the 2019 CBCA Short List: Younger Readers



#### Parts in this unit

- [Field and context](#)
- [Responding and exploring](#)
- [Examining](#)

**Authors:** Carl Merrison and Hakea Hustler

**Publisher:** [Magabala Books](#)

**Themes:** Indigenous culture, past and present, family, respect, freedom

**Years:** Australian Curriculum: English, Years 5 and 6; Health and Physical Education, Years 5 and 6; Humanities and Social Sciences (Geography), Year 5 and 6 (History), Year 5; Science, Years 5 and 6. NSW Stage 3

**From the publisher's synopsis:** *Black Cockatoo* is a vignette that follows Mia, a young Aboriginal girl as she explores the fragile connections of family and culture. Mia is a 13-year-old girl from a remote community in the Kimberley. She is saddened by the loss of her brother as he distances himself from the family. She feels powerless to change the things she sees around her, until one day she rescues her totem animal, the dirran black cockatoo, and soon discovers her own inner strength. A wonderful small tale on the power of standing up for yourself, culture and ever-present family ties.

**Unit writer:** [Helen Cozmescu](#)

## Field and context

### Building field knowledge

- Participate in the [Aussie Backyard Bird Count](#) or create your own roster to collect data on birds in the school yard. Consider appropriate ways to make the data readable to others. [ACSSU094 ST3-1WS-S](#)
- Divide students into groups, to explore one online site that provides information about the black cockatoo species. Students map out the reading pathway and critique the site according to the content and ease of access to information about the cockatoos' needs, the threats they faced and measures put in place to prevent their extinction, by commenting on the website's use of colour, framing, layout, headings and hyperlinks. [Site 1](#); [Site 2](#); [Site 3](#); [Site 4](#); [Site 5](#). [ACELY1708 EN3-3A](#)
- Listen to information about [Aboriginal kinship](#). [ACHASSK140 GE3-2](#)
- Prepare a list of questions and invite an Aboriginal elder from the local area to speak to the students about the totems and customs of the local Indigenous people. [ACHASSK140 GE3-2](#)

### Exploring the context of the text

- Use the glossary from the text to pronounce Aboriginal words. [ACELA1515 EN3-1A](#)
- Investigate Aboriginal English or Kriol and the [teaching of it in schools](#). Discuss the benefits and challenges of teaching Aboriginal languages in schools. [ACELA1501 EN3-1A](#)
- Identify the cultural aspects, passed on through generations that are important to Mia's family. [ACPPS051](#)
- Draw a family tree for Mia's family, indicating the important extended family relationships. [ACPPS056 K-6 PDHPE](#)
- Chapter 9 references the Stolen Generation. Use a [documentary, online information](#) and a range of children's literature to explore this part of Australia's history – [Stolen Girl](#), [Sister Heart](#), [Pilawuk: When I was young](#) and [Down the Hole](#). [ACHASSI094 HT3-5](#)
- Find out about [National Sorry Day](#). Invite students to respond through artwork, prose or poetry and share their responses with classmates. [ACHASSK108 HT3-5](#)

## Responding and exploring

### Responding to the text

- Use an [Indigenous language](#) map, to find Jaru Country. Use a [geo tool](#) to investigate the area and develop an understanding of the setting of Country, as described by Mia. Write a descriptive paragraph about the area and compare it with the descriptions provided in the text. [ACELT1618 EN3-7C](#)
- Mia talks about living in two worlds. Discuss what she means by this and what evidence there is in the text of cultural conflict. [ACELY1702 EN3-3A](#)

### Exploring plot character and setting

- Make an emotions and character trait chart for Mia and Jy. Use quotes from the text to support your thinking. [ACELY1712 EN3-3A](#)
- Find examples of tension between characters, such as Grandfather and Jy; and Mia and Jy. Identify the factors that caused tension and share ideas about what each character would have to do to have them resolved. [ACELT1610 EN3-8D](#)
- Draw a map of life events in Jy's life. Consider if these could impact upon how he thinks, feels and behaves today. [ACELT1608 EN3-8D](#)

- Discuss how Mia's, Grandfather's and Jy's attitude and actions towards animals differ and compare these to your thinking. [ACELT1610 EN3-8D](#)
- Find evidence of power relationships and categorise these under age, gender, status, or experience. Share your thoughts and feelings about this. [ACELT1608 EN3-8D](#)
- Mia feels closely liked to her home and Country, yet in the final chapter she dreams of flying away. Re-read this chapter and discuss how this dream relates to the ending of the story. [ACELY1709 EN3-1A](#)

## Creating texts

- The narrative can be described as contemporary realism, as it is set in today's times, has realistic characters and situations, and presents emotional conflict for some of the characters. Create a narrative plan for a fictional short story set in a familiar time and place. [ACELY1704 EN3-2A](#)

## Examining

### Examining text structure and organisation

- The text is made up of eleven short chapters. Identify the main event that happens in each chapter and discuss its relationship to one of the key themes. [ACELT1614 EN3-7C](#)
- A glossary is included, translating Aboriginal and Kriol words to English. Examine each of the words, in the context of the text, and decide if there were enough contextual clues to work out meaning. [ACELY1712 EN3-3A](#)

### Examining grammar

- Choose a character and categorise their dialogue under the headings of commands, questions or statements. What do your results tell you about the character? [ACELY1694 EN3-2A](#)
- Examine the final chapter, for the authors' use of: **prepositional phrases** – *She knew he would not last long in the bush, outside the safety of his cage, but Mia knew it was right*; **adverbials of place** – *At the end of town, she heard it*; **adverbials of manner** – *She gently reached into the cage, carefully avoiding the strong beak and sharp claws*; **adverbials of time** – *That afternoon Mia sat out by the big tree talking to the dirram in his cage*. Find other examples, throughout the text. [ACELA1523 EN3-6B](#)

### Examining visual and multimodal features

- Each chapter has a full page illustration of some aspect of nature – cockatoo, snake or the bush. Discuss your personal response to the artwork and share how it makes you feel. Discuss the effect the use of black has on the viewer. Examine the illustration in the last chapter, and identify the aspect that makes this illustration feel different from the others. [ACELT1617 EN3-7C](#)
- Try to replicate the feeling the illustrator conveys, by drawing with dark, grey lead pencils and applying a lighter black paint wash over the top. [ACELT1616 EN3-7C](#)

**Additional and related resources and links to other texts:** Learn about [National Sorry Day](#). Explore the authors' [website](#). Read other stories with similar themes, such as [My Girragundji](#). View picture story books that hold a strong theme of Country: [My Country](#), [Welcome to Country](#) and [Kakadu Calling](#). Read [Our Birds](#), which denotes the special significance of birds to the Yolnu People. Also find a PETAA CBCA unit of work for [Welcome to Country](#).

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