

Teachers Notes
by Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright

Jandamarra

by
Mark Greenwood and Terry Denton

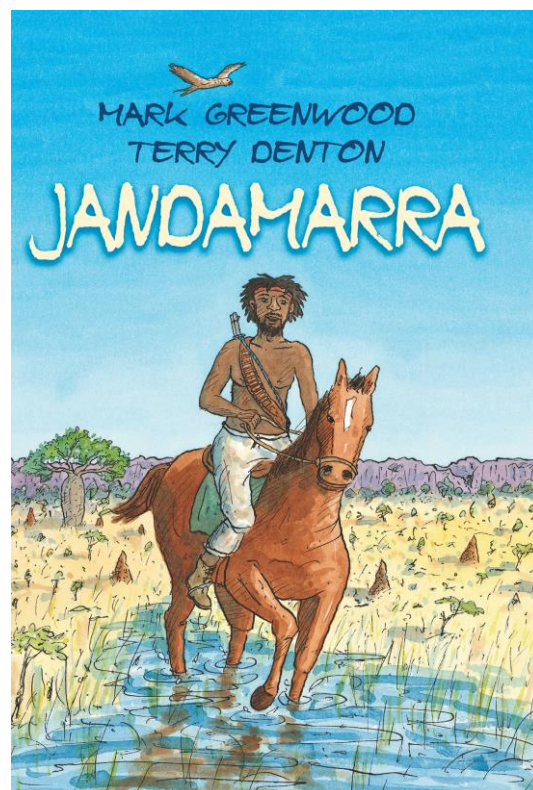
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Recommended for ages 7-12 yrs

Older students and adults will also appreciate this book.

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INTRODUCTION

'Burrudi yatharra thirrili ngarra'
We are still here and strong.

Jandamarra was an Indigenous hero...whose white 'bosses' called him Pigeon. He knew in his heart that the country was inscribed by powerful spirits in the contours of its landscape. The Wandjinas created the land and sky. They also created the spirits that swim in the water soaks and sacred places. Pigeon couldn't see them, but these spirits visited his dreams.

Jandamarra's story is an epic and tragic tale which Mark Greenwood has re-told in a simple and yet majestic style, accompanied by Terry Denton's vibrantly graphic, illustrative interpretation. This is a creative re-imagining of the life of an extraordinary man and of a seminal time in Australia's history. The reverberations of the events known as the 'frontier wars' are still being felt more than one hundred years later and will continue to have an impact on our national psyche.

Jandamarra and his people are still here, and they are still strong.

CURRICULUM AREAS

This book might be studied in lower and upper primary, and also lower secondary classrooms. It is relevant in two **curriculum areas**: **Arts** (Language and Literacy, Visual Literacy, Creative Arts); and **Studies of Society & Environment** (Themes, and Values). Within **SOSE** it could be used to explore **Themes** such as:

- **National Heroes,**
- **Indigenous History and Culture,**
- **Frontier Wars,**
- **Magic and Spiritual Power,**
- **Kinship and Community**

and to explore **Values** such as:

- **Bravery,**
- **Justice**

[See notes under **Curriculum Areas** below.]

CURRICULUM AREAS

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

- This book tells a vibrant story in prose which captures both the adventure and the mythical nature of the life of Jandamarra. Given that this is a true story, the author has also 'imagined' some of the details so that the story might be termed '**faction**' as well as being a documentary account drawing on the stories told to him by the Elders of the Bunuba people. **Invite students to tell the story** in their own words. **Compare these versions**, to highlight the **different elements** of the story which have had the most impact on them.

- The story employs a **third person narrative voice** allowing distance from the subject of the narrative. How might Jandamarra have told the story in first person; or the tracker Micki, for instance?
- Jandamarra never had the opportunity to tell his own life story. **Read other life stories in picture book form by Aboriginal people** e.g. Ian Abdulla's *As I Grew Older* (1993); Elaine Russell's *A is for Aunty* (2000); Oodgeroo Nunukul's *Stradbroke Dreamtime* (1993). Discuss and compare them.
- Write an **acrostic poem** using the letters in the name 'Jandamarra' to describe what he was like.
- Test your students' **comprehension** after reading the story by answering simple questions. [See **BLM 1: Comprehension Quiz** at the end of these notes.]

VISUAL LITERACY

- This work is illustrated in **comic or graphic novel style**, using a varied format for each double page spread. It might be used with mid to upper primary and also secondary readers. Conduct a unit on picture books illustrated in comic or graphic novel style, and encourage students to seek out similar examples of such art. [See **Bibliography**.]
- Discuss the **layout and design** of the book, and of the individual double page spreads within it. The format varies from page to page with comic style images, double page spreads, and images within larger images. How does this affect the reading of the book?
- The **title page** contains a picture of Jandamarra as a stock rider. What does this image suggest? What feelings or themes might it evoke for a reader?
- Encourage students to **read for the 'sub-text'** and observe how the pictures and the text work together; how images illuminate meaning, complimenting and enriching the text. Examine several images in the book for their possible meanings. For example, the image of Pigeon retreating into a crevice at the back of the cave is illustrated as if a series of photos have been laid on the page in a sequential fashion illustrating the circuitous route he takes through the rocks. Why might the illustrator have used this technique?
- The artist's images are executed in **pen and ink drawings overlaid with painting**. Discuss these techniques and the artist's choice of media with your students and then encourage them to create a picture in the same style. [See also **BLM 2**.]
- What **colours** are particularly evident in this book?
- How does Terry Denton **convey emotions** in his images?
- Discuss the **format, and use of perspective and spatial relationship** in this visual text, in individual **double page spreads**.
- Examine the front and back **cover images**, and discuss their impact on reading the story. For example, on the front cover, Jandamarra is depicted riding a horse through the ant-beds, not walking through the country as his people had done for centuries. This image deliberately suggests the way in which Aboriginal people's lives were changed and how they either adapted, or did not survive white invasion. Read too, the text on the back cover, and discuss with reference to the topics raised in **SOSE Themes** below.
- Make a **comic** of your own, telling the story of another key Indigenous figure such as Pemulwuy. [See **BLM 4** for template.] For suitable templates, consult web pages such as 'Comic Strip Layouts' <<http://donnayoung.org/art/comics.htm>> **Note:** Students

should be aware that telling such a story for publication would entail them consulting with relevant Indigenous groups and elders, just as Mark Greenwood and Terry Denton did to create this book.

- Examine some **contemporary Indigenous writers and illustrators' works** and discuss them. [See **Bibliography**.]

CREATIVE ARTS

Jandamarra's story has been told several times for adults, including Howard Pedersen's *Jandamarra and the Bunuba Resistance* (Magabala Books, 2007), a stage play by Steve Hawke (2008), an ABC documentary (2011), and in John Nicholson's non-fiction book for younger readers, *Kimberley Warrior* (Allen & Unwin, 1997). [See **Bibliography**.] This dramatised new telling of the story for children and teenagers might be used to encourage students to create their own version of the story in a range of styles, formats, and mediums, and in a range of other creative arts such as acting, improvisation, music and dance.

- Improvise the scene in the book where Jandamarra is deciding whether or not to kill Trooper Richardson and free his captives.
- Choose pieces of Indigenous music (by e.g. Yothu Yindi, Geoffrey "Gurumul" Yunupingu Dan Kelly, etc) which might be suggestive of Jandamarra's conflict.
- Have the class create a mural on a wall in your classroom using comic techniques; invite students to create different panels telling Jandamarra's story. The mural might be painted on butchers' paper and then displayed.
- Secondary students might watch films such as 'The Tracker' (2002) by Rolf de Heer which offers insights into this history. Nicolas Roeg's 'Walkabout' (1971) is another classic film about white encounters with Indigenous culture.

STUDIES OF SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT

SOSE THEMES

National Heroes

- 'Jandamarra should be as well known as Ned Kelly.' Have your students **research, discuss and then debate** this topic with reference to both figures.
- What defines a 'hero'? Is it bravery, or is it a combination of other qualities such as kindness, nobility, or intelligence?

Indigenous History and Culture

- Aboriginal men and women were often employed on stations for 'wages of flour and sugar' (p. 6) as Jandamarra was. Their cultural traditions, kinship connections, and even their names were often lost: the boss at Lennard Station called him 'Pigeon'. **How did such treatment** affect generations of Aboriginal people? How does it **reflect on us as a nation?** When did the law recognise Aboriginal people's rights to equal pay and recognition for their work?
- Aboriginal stockmen were renowned for their skills, and Jandamarra learned to ride, shear and shoot with great skill. Read other stories about these skills in texts such as *Unbranded* by Herb Wharton (UQP, 2000). Read about other Aboriginal achievements in *My Kind of People: Achievement, identity and Aboriginality* by Wayne Coolwell (UQP, 1993).

- 'While their sheep fattened in fertile pastures, station owners fenced billabongs and sacred Bunuba sites with post and rail.' (p. 8) Discuss what this sort of **desecration of sacred sites** means to Aboriginal people.
- 'Pigeon's loyalty to the station boss ended when Bunuba elders took him on a secret journey. He was taught the ancient law of his people.' (p. 12) Why did Pigeon feel loyalty to his boss? Why did learning about the old ways change that? Later he is ostracised by the Elders or lawmen of his own skin group because he broke 'sacred kinship law' in consorting with women of another group. And so he became a tracker for the white policeman, Trooper Richardson. How did such **conflicts affect kinship** groups in Aboriginal culture?
- This book talks of people being shackled and taken away from their homelands. This sort of dispersal also led to Aboriginal people being disinherited by separating them from their languages and cultural traditions. **Discuss.**
- Revisionist historians are unearthing many stories of Aboriginal people who were denied their rightful place in Australian history. Choose another figure such as Yagan or Pemulwuy. See 'Aboriginal Heroes: Episodes in the Colonial Landscape' by Dale Kerwin
<<http://www.qhatlas.com.au/content/aboriginal-heroes-episodes-colonial-landscape>>
or
'Aboriginal Resistance Heroes'
<<http://www.mabonativetitle.com/info/aboriginalResistanceHeroes.htm>>
- Jandamarra's story takes place in the Kimberley region in Western Australia. Encourage students to trace the journeys he made, and the **landmarks mentioned in this story**. Read about how Aboriginal people were displaced in these areas.

Frontier Wars

- Pigeon becomes a 'Bunuba warrior' in the fight between black and white. The frontier wars were about territory and property. The Bunuba people believed that the land was rightfully theirs. When the white men raised first sheep and then cattle on this country, the Bunuba people were forced to steal for food, as many of their earlier food sources had been denied to them. In retaliation, brutal raids were made on Aboriginal camps: men were killed in front of their families or hauled away to become virtual slaves; women and children were brutalised. **Research further by reading** accounts such as Henry Reynolds' *The Other Side of the Frontier* (UNSW Press, 2006).
- 'Pigeon's people were not willing to surrender their country.' (p. 9) **Discuss this quote in the context of** the recognition of Native Title obtained in the Australian High Court judgment *re the Mabo v. Queensland* case in 1992. Research the history of this decision further.
- Amongst Australian historians and commentators, there have been fierce theoretical debates (sometimes known as the 'history wars') about the validity of claims about the violence committed on the frontier during the early colonial period. Encourage students to read widely and to share different interpretations of these events in **essays or short addresses** to the class.

Magic and Spiritual Power

- 'He emerged from the cave of bats with the name given to him by his people. He was Jandamarra, a man with magic power—a *Jalgangurru*. He could fly like a bird and appear and disappear like a ghost.' (p. 35) **Discuss the concepts** evoked in this passage.

Kinship & Community

- **Stories** are told in Aboriginal culture in order to explore cultural traditions and kinship structures. Read more about the topic and discuss in class. See for example:

Aboriginal Kinship Systems <http://austhrutime.com/kinship_systems.htm>

Or

'Australian Aboriginal Kinship' *Wikipedia*

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Aboriginal_kinship>

Or

Central Lands Council *Kinship & Skin Names*

<<http://www.clc.org.au/articles/info/aboriginal-kinship>>

SOSE VALUES

Bravery

- Bravery is often narrowly defined as a willingness to go into battle and risk one's life. Certainly Jandamarra is brave when he challenges the white forces towards the end of his life. But he is brave in a number of other ways, too. He is first separated from family and forced to learn white skills; then he is re-introduced to his culture but is again separated from it by white laws; he learns how to live in white society again but the powerful pull of his culture forces him to escape and to become a renegade. **Is bravery about** physical acts of retaliation, or is it about spiritual resilience?
- What brave things **have you ever witnessed**? Are there any brave people in your family? Why do you think they are brave?

Justice

- Jandamarra takes justice into his own hands when he becomes a renegade warrior. **Is violence ever justified**?
- The troopers and their trackers represented justice in these early colonial days. Were their actions always just? **Read more about this** history in order to answer this question.

CONCLUSION

'Jandamarra was dreaming of the living water.' (p. 46)

On a solemn note, this story ends with Jandamarra's death, but with his spirit still intact. The stories of his exploits have kept his spirit alive; he is a hero and a warrior and his inspiring story is one which every Australian might be told, just as we've been told the stories of other national heroes such as Ned Kelly, or the soldiers at Gallipoli, whose stories have contributed to our national myth-making. Revisionist historians and storytellers are working hard to demonstrate why Aboriginal figures such as Jandamarra, Yagan or Pemulwuy should be included in our pantheon of national heroes. This book is one of several recent texts which resurrect such figures from the 'bottom drawer' of history and return them to public view where they belong.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF RELATED TEXTS

PICTURE BOOKS ON INDIGENOUS THEMES

Abdulla, Ian *As I Grew Older*. Omnibus Books, 1993.

The Papunya School Book of Country and History by Papunya School community with Nadia Wheatley and Ken Searle. Allen & Unwin, 2003.

Maralinga, the Anangu Story by Yalata, Oak Valley Communities with Christobel Mattingley. Allen & Unwin, 2012.

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Russell, Elaine *A is for Aunty*. ABC BOOKS, 2000.

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ABOUT PICTURE BOOKS & GRAPHIC NOVELS

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Gleeson, Libby *Making Picture Books*. Scholastic, 2003.

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Coolwell, Wayne *My Kind of People: Achievement, identity and Aboriginality*. UQP, 1993.

Hawke, Steve *Jandamarra: A Kimberley Story that Speaks to Everyone* (Play). Black Swan Theatre Company and Bunuba Films, 2008.

Jandamarra and the Bunuba Resistance by Howard Pedersen and Banjo Woorunmurra. Magabala Books, 2007.

Kimberley Stories edited by Sandy Toussaint. Fremantle Press, 2012.

Nicholson, John *Kimberley Warrior : the story of Jandamarra* (True Stories series). Allen & Unwin, 1997.

Reynolds, Henry *The Other Side of the Frontier*. UNSW Press, 2006.

INTERNET RESOURCES

ON GRAPHIC NOVELS AND COMICS:

Bryan, Gregory, George W. Chilcoat, and Timothy G. Morrison, 'Pow! Zap! Wham! Creating Comic Books from Picture Books in Social Studies Classrooms'. *Canadian Social Studies* Volume 37, Number 1, Fall 2002. Available at:

<http://www2.education.ualberta.ca/css/css_37_1/ftcomics_in_social_studies.htm>

'Comic Strip Layouts'

<<http://donnayoung.org/art/comics.htm>>

'Graphic Novels', Allen & Unwin's website provides links to some valuable references on this topic.

<<http://www.allenandunwin.com/default.aspx?page=598>>

'Graphic Novels' Research Project of PHD Candidate Clare Snowball

<<http://alia.org.au/~csnow/research/index.html>>

ON JANDAMARRA AND OTHER ABORIGINAL RESISTENCE HEROES

'Aboriginal Heroes: Episodes in the Colonial Landscape' by Dale Kerwin

<<http://www.qhatlas.com.au/content/aboriginal-heroes-episodes-colonial-landscape>>

Aboriginal Kinship Systems

<http://austhrutime.com/kinship_systems.htm>

'Aboriginal Resistance Heroes'

<<http://www.mabonativetitle.com/info/aboriginalResistanceHeroes.htm>>

'Australian Aboriginal Kinship' *Wikipedia*

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'Pemulwuy (1750-1802)' by J.L. Kohen *Australian Dictionary of Biography*

<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/pemulwuy-13147>

ABOUT THE WRITERS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Greenwood is an author with a passion for Australian history. His books, *The Legend of Moondyne Joe* and *The Legend of Lasseter's Reef* have won the West Australian Premier's Award for children's books. *Simpson and His Donkey*, illustrated by Frané Lessac, was a Children's Book Council Information Honor Book and a USBY Outstanding International Book. *Ned Kelly and the Green Sash* won the WAYBRA Hoffman Award for Young Readers

Mark's other books include *Magic Boomerang*, *Outback Adventure*, *Our Big Island*, *The Greatest Liar on Earth* and *The Drummer Boy of John John*, recently selected by Kirkus Reviews in the US in its list of Best Children's Books of 2012.

Visit his website for more information. <http://www.markgreenwood.com.au/>

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Terry Denton has illustrated more than 100 books, twenty of which he has also written. He won both the Multicultural Book of the Year and the Best Designed Picture Book in 1993. In 2003 and 2008 he was shortlisted for the Aurealis Award. His work has also won more than 40 children's choice awards throughout Australia. In 2008 *Just Shocking!* won all six children's choice awards in Australia. He has also been shortlisted by the CBCA many times. Visit his various publishers' websites for any further information.

See also: 'Andy Griffiths and Terry Denton', a conversation between Andy Griffiths and Terry Denton, chaired by Anna McFarlane when she was publisher of Children's Books, Pan Macmillan, Children's Book Council of Australia Conference, Sydney, May 2006:

<http://andygriffiths.com.au/articles/theillustratorascoauthor>

and

Bradford, Clare 'Know the illustrator: Terry Denton' *Magpies* Vol.4 No.1 March 1989 pp.18-19.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THESE NOTES

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright operates *justified text* writing and publishing consultancy services, has published widely on children's and YA literature, and in 2011 was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland, and in 2012 the CBCA (National) Nan Chauncy Award for Outstanding Services to Children's Literature in Australia.

COMPREHENSION QUIZ

Questions:

1. What is the name which Jandamarra is given by his white employer?
2. What wage was he offered by this boss?
3. What was Jandamarra fastest at by the time he was 14?
4. Where was Jandamarra sent when he was caught and accused of stealing?
5. What sport does he prove to be skilled in?
6. What did Aboriginal people call 'devil horns'?
7. Who was Ellemarra?
8. Who are the two trackers mentioned in this book?
9. What is a man with magic power know as in Jandamarra's culture?
10. Where is Jandamarra finally caught by the tracker?



Answers: 1. Pigeon. 2. Flour and sugar. 3. He was the fastest shearer on the station. 4. Derby Jail. 5. Boxing. 6. Cattle. 7. Jandamarra's uncle. 8. Captain and Micki. 9. A Jalgangurru. 10. At the mouth of the cave of bats.

JANDAMARRA

Create a collage of this image of Jandamarra on a cliff top. Use ochre colours for the country, and tactile things such as leaves, grass stems etc.



STORY STARTER

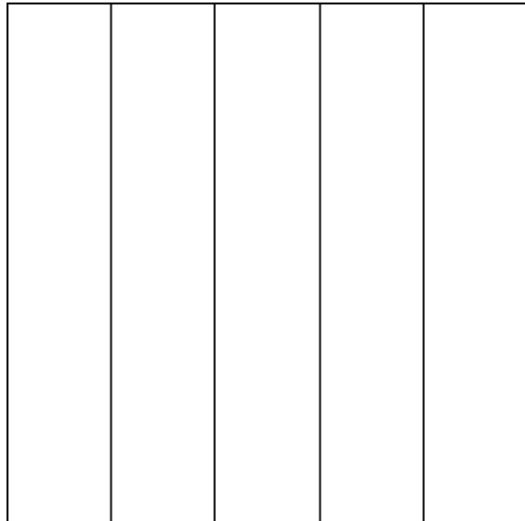


Write a short story using this image as inspiration.

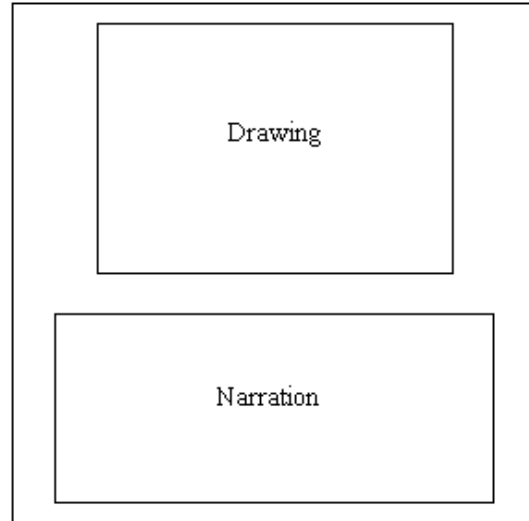
A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing a short story.

MAKE YOUR OWN COMIC

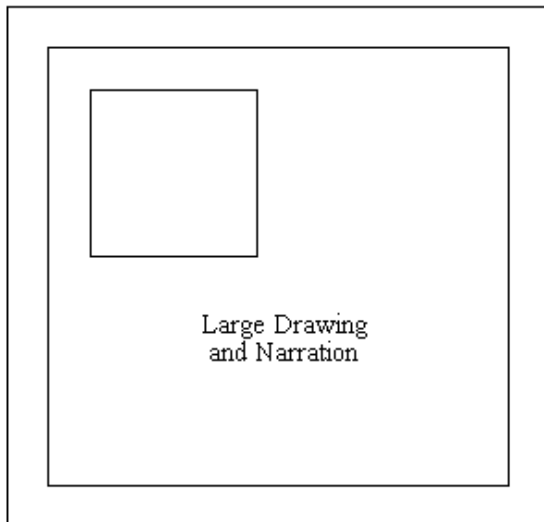
Design your own comic strip based on an incident in this book.



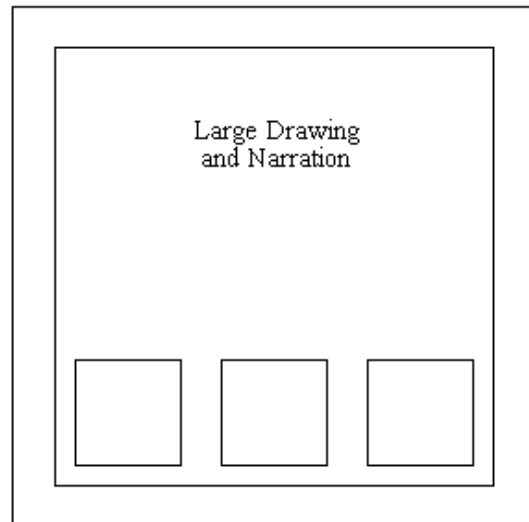
Contiguous Panel



Text-heavy Panel



Insert Panel



Meta-Panel