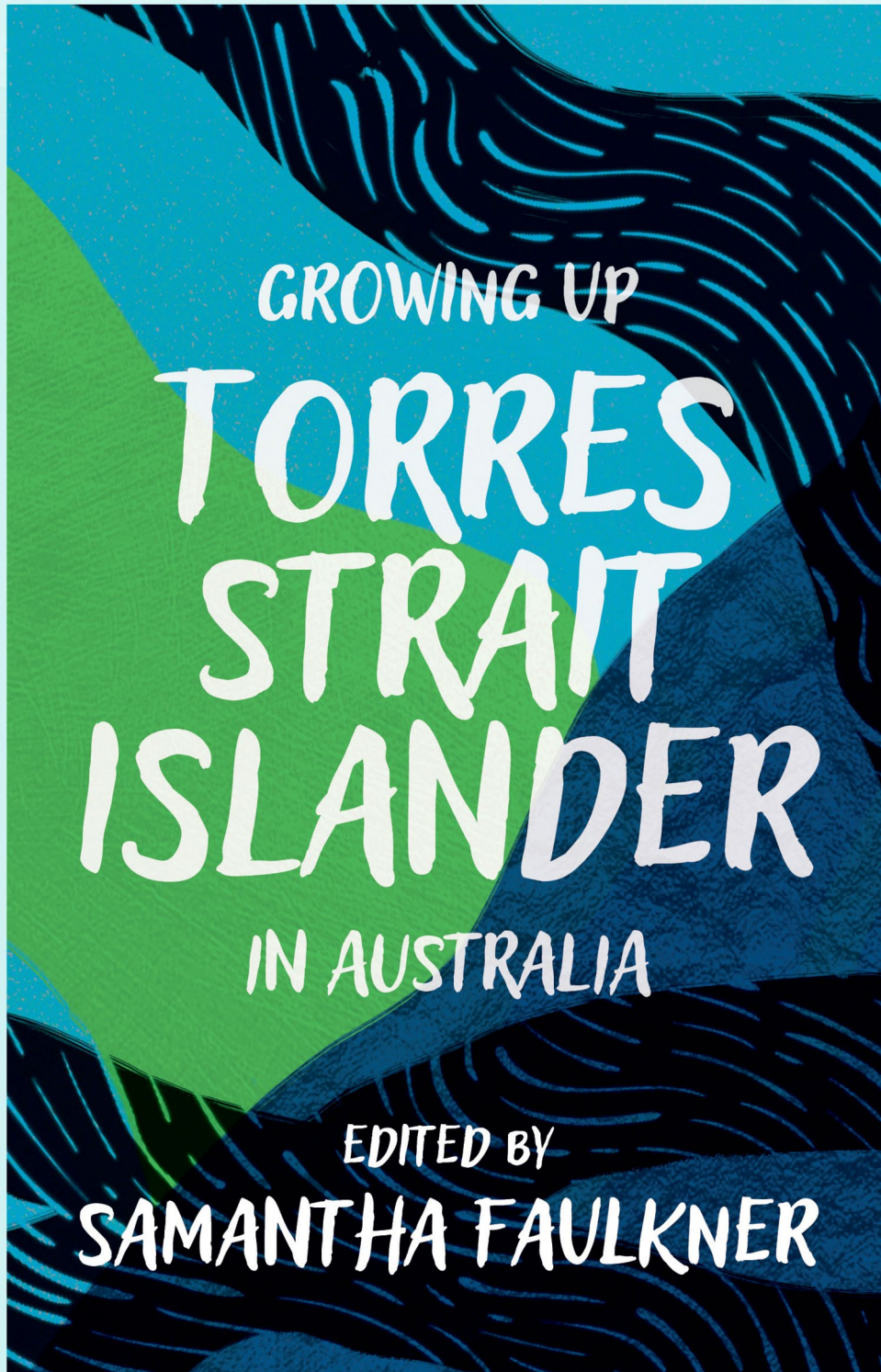


Teaching Notes

by Antoinette Cole



Year levels: 7–12

Teacher professional development

Themes: identity; culture; Australian history; Torres Strait Islander people; representation; racism; kinship; resilience

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Teaching Notes

Synopsis

Growing Up Torres Strait Islander in Australia is a collection of stories that celebrates the strength, pride and culture of Torres Strait Islander communities. The collection represents a diverse range of voices: emerging and established writers, Elders and young people, men and women, people living on the Islands and people living on the mainland, contemporary writers and writers from the past. Many of the stories highlight the rich fabric of Torres Strait Islander culture, the impact government acts and policies have had on people's lives, and the resilience of Torres Strait Islander people in the face of these challenges. A strong theme throughout the collection is the importance of speaking back to continuing stereotypes and negative positioning of Indigenous people in Australian society and affirming Torres Strait Islander identity and culture. The authors in this collection do this by providing counternarratives that showcase culture, family, the achievements of Torres Strait Islander people, and an enduring connection to the land, seas and skies of the Torres Strait.

As the other First Nations Australians, we have a unique identity and experience that should be celebrated. However, there is a demonstrated lack of knowledge about Torres Strait Islanders (and Aboriginal people) and the challenges we continue to face. At a national political level, this is translated into the development of substandard policies and legislation, which negatively affects our families and communities and locks us in a cycle of poverty and disadvantage

—Donisha Duff (p. 156)

Torres Strait Islanders were the first to build an Indigenous Voice – a representative body – following the 1936 Maritime Strike, in which pearling workers fought for better pay and conditions, and for island autonomy. Torres Strait Islanders defended our country, and as part of the defence force were paid less than the white soldiers.

—Thomas Mayo (p.16)

The Government has long used Islanders to boost the economy of this State. This included cheap labour they took from my father.

Now they are trying to stop us having land we are entitled to ... My family has occupied the land for hundreds of years before Captain Cook was born. They are now trying to say I cannot own it.

—Eddie Koiki Mabo (p.32)

For me, living as a Torres Strait Islander comes with expectations: to understand what it means to be a sovereign people, the custodians of our lands, seas, culture, and language; to trust that we have successfully governed ourselves and maintained our environment for thousands of years and can continue to do so.

—Jillian Boyd-Bowie (p.81)

Our worldview is deeply enshrined through a cultural lens. These foundations were formed from an early age and heavily influenced by my grandmother.

—Leilani Bin Juda (p.111)

Identity and representation are important to Torres Strait Islanders.

—Lenora Thakker (p. 3)

The most important thing I tell myself is that no one can take it away from me. I know who my family is, and even though I didn't grow up on the Islands, that doesn't make me any less of a Torres Strait Islander. My connection to my family and culture is still strong and will continue to grow as I grow.

—Ellen Armstrong (p. 93)

This collection provides the foundation for teachers and students in Australian schools to challenge ongoing negative discourse about Indigenous Australians. In Australia, Indigenous people are a minority, making up approximately 3 per cent of the Australian population. To ensure Torres Strait Islander people's knowledge and perspectives are authentically incorporated into learning experiences for all Australian students, it is critical that their voices and experiences be included in the Australian Curriculum.

Themes

Texts that centre the voices of Torres Strait Islander peoples are critical resources for schools that want to ensure that Torres Strait Islander people's knowledge and perspectives are authentically incorporated into the curriculum and the learning experiences of Australian students.

All of the authors in this collection are Torres Strait Islander people, making it a unique text. It provides teachers and students with multiple opportunities to meaningfully engage with the culture, knowledge and experiences of Torres Strait Islander people growing up in Australia. A theme that many of the authors reflect on is what the strength of their identity means to them. Leilani Bin-Juda shares the following:

From my early life until now, strong cultural values and identity have been key to growing up Torres Strait Islander. Meaningful relationships underscored with respect and listening to and learning from those willing to share their story, knowledge, and time, especially Elders, remain important. (p. 110)

Others reflect on how they've needed to push back against racism and negative positioning. Donisha Duff shares the following:

Most often, the response from my teachers and other school kids when I identified as a Torres Strait Islander was, 'Are you sure? You don't look Aboriginal.' Clearly, I wasn't the stereotypical dark-skinned version they were used to seeing in storybooks. (p. 154)

Being a Torres Strait Islander in Australia today, I am constantly educating people about who I am, where I am from and how we are different from Aboriginal Australians. (p. 154)

Other themes that emerge throughout the text are outlined below, providing teachers with a framework for using the collection as a resource across multiple learning areas:

- Australian history: colonisation; assimilation; blood quantum laws; missions; stolen generations.
- Activism: political activism; social activism; resistance; role models.
- Country: connection to Country; significance of place.
- Culture: community; language; tradition; customs; protocols; resilience; pride; loss; two worlds; giving back.
- Identity and intersectionality: diversity; socio-economic status.
- Kin: care; connectedness; family.
- Racism: blood quantum laws; exclusion (school and social); skin colour; stereotypes.

Australian Curriculum

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures are a Cross-Curriculum Priority (CCP) in the Australian Curriculum. Including this subject matter in the curriculum:

- allows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to see themselves and their cultural identity reflected in the curriculum; and
- provides opportunities for all Australian students to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's knowledge, experiences, values and perspectives, deepening their knowledge and learning about the world's oldest living cultures.

This CCP is underpinned by the three organising ideas of Country/Place, Culture and People:

- *Country/Place* recognises the unique physical and spiritual connection that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to Country/Place and acknowledges the impact of colonisation on that connection.
- *Culture* recognises the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, customs, traditions and ways of living through a historical and social lens.
- *People* explores the political, economic and social organisation systems of Torres Strait Islander communities – such as family and kinship structures, traditions, customs and protocols – and the ways these systems maintain strong governance and authority. *People* also recognises the national and global contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

There are multiple ways that the text can be used as a learning resource to support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures CCP and its organising ideas of Country/Place, Culture and People.

Across Years 7–10, the text could support the learning areas of English, Humanities and Social Sciences, Health and Physical Education, the Arts and Science. It could also be used to support learning in English and Humanities and Social Sciences in the senior curriculum.

The table below maps out the text’s themes according to the CCP’s organising ideas:

Australian Curriculum CCP: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures	Themes from <i>Growing Up Torres Strait Islander in Australia</i>	Chapter Suggestions (many chapters could incorporate all three organising ideas)
Country/Place	Connection to Country; significance of place	‘A Torres Strait Islander Mainland Story’ (p. 158) ‘Cultured Pearl’ (p. 69) ‘Do Your Best, Never Give Up’ (p. 112) ‘Duality’ (p. 179) ‘Edward Koiki Mabo: His Life and Struggle for Land Rights’ (p. 17) ‘Ina’s Story’ (p. 142) ‘My Father, Francis “The Hatman” Wapau’ (p. 59) ‘My Island Home and Away’ (p. 88) ‘My Link to the Torres Strait’ (p. 167) ‘Q & A with Jimi Bani’ (p. 34) ‘The Smell of Sugar Cane’ (p. 39) ‘Two Different Worlds’ (p. 174)
Culture	Australian history: colonisation; assimilation, blood quantum laws; missions; stolen generations Culture: community; language; tradition; customs; protocols; resilience; pride; loss; two worlds, giving back	‘A Torres Strait Islander Mainland Story’ (p. 158) ‘Coconut Oil Chronicles’ (p. 7) ‘Complexion’ (p. 184) ‘Cultured Pearl’ (p. 69) ‘Duality’ (p. 179) ‘Eded Mer (My Life)’ (p. 127) ‘Edward Koiki Mabo: His Life and Struggle for Land Rights’ (p. 17) ‘Ina’s Story’ (p. 142) ‘My Father, Francis “The Hatman” Wapau’ (p. 59) ‘My Link to the Torres Strait’ (p. 167) ‘Lessons from My Grandmother: A Window to the World’ (p. 94) ‘My Island Home and Away’ (p. 88) ‘One Culture’ (p. 53) ‘The Learning Time’ (p. 121) ‘The Other Indigenous Australians’ (p. 153) ‘The Smell of Sugar Cane’ (p. 39) ‘Thriving Spaces’ (p. 196) ‘Together, Our Differences Make Us Strong’ (p. 11) ‘Two Different Worlds’ (p. 174)

Australian Curriculum CCP: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures	Themes from <i>Growing Up Torres Strait Islander in Australia</i>	Chapter Suggestions (many chapters could incorporate all three organising ideas)
People	<p>Activism: political activism; social activism; resistance; role models</p> <p>Identity and inter-sectionality: diversity; socio-economic status</p> <p>Kin: care; connectedness; family</p> <p>Racism: blood quantum laws; exclusion (school and social), skin colour; stereotypes</p>	<p>‘Complexion’ (p. 184)</p> <p>‘Do Your Best, Never Give Up’ (p. 112)</p> <p>‘Edward Koiki Mabo: His Life and Struggle for Land Rights’ (p. 17)</p> <p>‘Ina’s Story’ (p. 142)</p> <p>‘My Father, Francis “The Hatman” Wapau’ (p. 59)</p> <p>‘Lessons from My Grandmother: A Window to the World’ (p. 94)</p> <p>‘One Culture’ (p. 53)</p> <p>‘Q & A with Jimi Bani’ (p. 34)</p> <p>‘The Learning Time’ (p. 121)</p> <p>‘The Other Indigenous Australians’ (p. 153)</p> <p>‘The Smell of Sugar Cane’ (p. 39)</p> <p>‘The Ties that Bind’ (p. 201)</p> <p>‘Thriving Spaces’ (p. 196)</p> <p>‘Together, Our Differences Make Us Strong’ (p. 11)</p>

Learning Activities

Country/Place

In the Australian Curriculum, *Country/Place* recognises the special connection First Nation Australians have to Country/Place and acknowledges the impacts of colonisation on their ownership of, and access to, Country/Place. The following activities are designed to recognise that special connection and acknowledge and discuss the impacts of colonisation on Torres Strait Islanders' ownership of, access to, and care for, Country/Place.

Before reading

ACTIVITY

Introduce students to the *AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia* to explore the diversity of Indigenous Australia and the diversity of groups and languages in the Torres Strait. As a group, discuss:

1. Who are the traditional owners of our school, and what is the traditional name used by the area's traditional owners?
2. What is the traditional name of the land where you were born or grew up?
3. What are the groups and languages in the Torres Strait and what is the connection between languages and groups?
4. How does this connection tie in to culture and identity for Torres Strait Islanders?
5. What does this tell us about the diversity of Torres Strait Islander identity, culture and perspectives?
6. Why are Torres Strait Islander people's perspectives and connection to Country/Place important?

If available, display the AIATSIS map on the classroom wall as a visual prompt. For help with pronunciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language groups and locations, the *Gambay – First Languages Map* is a great interactive resource.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT

Content description:

- AC9E8LE05 – Analyse how language features such as sentence patterns can create tone, and how literary devices such as imagery can create meaning and effect.
- AC9E8LA01 – Recognise how language shapes relationships and roles.

- AC9HG8K03 – Describe the spiritual, aesthetic and cultural value of landscapes and landforms for people, including Country/Place of First Nation Australians.

Elaborations:

- recognising that First Nation Australian authors use language to set a tone when writing or speaking about specific themes – e.g. by using specific words when writing or speaking about Country/Place;
- examining how Aboriginal Dreaming stories and Torres Strait Islander Creation stories give meaning to Country/Place;
- discussing the meaning of the stories that describe First Nation Australians’ special connection to Country/Place;
- discussing the multilayered meanings (material, cultural and spiritual wellbeing) associated with landscapes and significant landforms for First Nation Australians
- explaining the formation of a landform with reference to the special connections First Nation Australians have to Country/Place;
- exploring the *AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia* and identifying language names that inform relationships to Country/Place.

During reading

ACTIVITY

Introduce *Growing Up Torres Strait Islander in Australia* to the class. Allocate a chapter to each student group (depending on the class size, there will be two to four students reading and analysing each chapter).

Ask students to explore how the author(s) describes their connection to the Torres Strait using the following inquiry questions:

1. How did the author(s) describe their connection to the Torres Strait and its significance? What did you notice?
2. What multilayered meanings are in these connections?
3. What themes are discussed by the author(s) in relation to their connection to the Torres Strait (e.g., family, Country/Place, relocation and employment)?
4. What words and language are used by the author(s) when writing about specific themes (e.g. when writing or speaking about holistic values and belief systems connected to land, sea, sky and waterways)? What strikes you about the language they have used?
5. How are connections to place and country associated with understanding Australian history?
6. Describe what the significance of place means to you?
7. What are the similarities and differences between how you describe the significance of place and how the author(s) describes significance of place?

8. In what ways are connection to Country (and, in some cases, disconnection from Country) unique to the histories and experiences of Torres Strait Islander people in Australia?
9. How does the author(s) represent unique ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing in this text?
10. Why is it important that Torres Strait Islander people tell their own stories?

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT

Content description:

- AC9E8LE01 – Explain how ideas and points of view may represent the values of individuals and groups in literary texts drawn from historical, social and cultural contexts by First Nation Australian, Australian and world authors.
- AC9E8LE05 – Analyse how language features such as sentence patterns can create tone, and literary devices such as imagery can create meaning and effect.
- AC9E9LE01 – Analyse the representations of people and places in literary texts drawn from historical, social and cultural contexts by First Nation Australian, Australian and world authors.
- AC9HG10K03 – Describe the approaches of First Nation Australians to custodial responsibility and environmental management in different regions of Australia.

Elaborations:

- discussing the cultural connectedness and belonging that First Nation Australians have to a number of places through family, Country/Place, dispossession, relocation and employment;
- explaining the ways texts by First Nation Australian authors represent unique ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing;
- recognising that First Nation Australian authors use language to set the tone when writing or speaking about specific themes – e.g. by using specific words when writing or speaking about Country/Place;
- exploring how texts by First Nation Australian authors reflect unique ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing;
- identifying the influence of cultural values on how First Nation Australians manage environments (e.g. continuity of cultural practices, management or development of Country/Place, and land tenure systems) and explaining custodial responsibilities for Country/Place.

People

In the Australian Curriculum, *People* recognises that Australia has two distinct First Nation peoples, each encompassing a diversity of nations and peoples. It also examines the significant contributions of First Nation Australians' histories and cultures on a local, national and global scale. The following activities are designed to examine the diversity of Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, and their contributions on a local, national and global scale.

Before reading

ACTIVITY

Ask students to choose a Torres Strait Islander role model and trailblazer – e.g. Eddie Mabo, Ellie Gaffney or Charles Meme – and research and write an essay about their lives. Students may also identify authors from the previous activity as role models.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT

Content description:

- AC9E9LE01 – Analyse the representations of people and places in literary texts drawn from historical, social, and cultural contexts by First Nation Australian, Australian and world authors.
- AC9HC7K02 – Explain the characteristics of Australia's democracy, including freedom of speech, association, assembly, religion and movement.
- AC9HH10K09 – Explain the causes of First Nation Australians' campaigns for rights and freedoms before 1965, such as discriminatory legislation and policies, the 1938 Day of Mourning and the stolen generations.
- AC9HH10K10 – Examine the contributions of significant individuals and groups in the campaign for the recognition of the rights of First Nation Australians and the extent to which they brought change to Australian society.
- AC9HH10K13 – Describe the continuing efforts in Australia to establish civil rights and freedoms for First Nation Australians, migrants and women.

Elaborations:

- exploring how texts by First Nation Australian authors reflect unique ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing;
- examining the active citizenship of First Nation Australians such as Neville Bonner, Adam Goodes, Noel Pearson, Murrandoo Yanner, Charles Meme, Ellie Gaffney, Evelyn Scott and Pat O'Shane, and their contributions to the rights and freedoms of Australian First Nation peoples.

During reading

ACTIVITY

Allocate two chapters to each student group (students should be given different chapters than were allocated to them in previous activities). Depending on the class size, there will be two to four students reading and analysing each chapter.

Students will create a presentation that critically examines how the authors communicate their identity as Torres Strait Islanders using the following subheadings:

- **Identity:** How does the author(s) you examined talk about their Torres Strait Islander identity?
- **Australian history:** What aspects of Australian history (e.g. colonisation, assimilation, disconnection, mission life, move to mainland during World War II, the 1936 Maritime Strike) are discussed in the chapter?
- **Speaking back:** In what ways does the author 'speak back' to stereotypes about Torres Strait Islander people?
- **Other key themes** (e.g., racism).

Students are to use scholarly sources to further support their presentation when introducing key topics.

ACTIVITY

Allocate one of these chapters for each student to read (students should be given different chapters than were allocated to them in previous activities): 'The Ties That Bind', 'Thriving Spaces', 'Complexion', 'Duality', 'The Other Indigenous Australian', 'Cultured Pearl', 'A Torres Strait Islander Mainland Story' or 'Two Different Worlds'.

The authors of these stories discuss stereotypes, exclusion (school or social), blood quantum laws, and biases and assumptions based on skin colour and race.

Ask students to write a report on the author's discussion of the impact of racism on Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. The report should include some scholarly research on the types of racism discussed – e.g. blood quantum laws, exclusion (school or social), biases based on skin colour, and stereotypes. For example, if blood quantum laws are mentioned, students should use scholarly sources to explain to their peers the origin and meaning of the term and how it relates to the experiences of the author. If examples of racism are present, do some research into how racism works and the history of racism in relation to Torres Strait Islander people in Australia.

The following inquiry questions will assist students to shape their research on the topic of racism and to engage in understanding their own privilege or marginalisation in Australian society:

1. How does race shape our lives?
2. How often do you think about race in your day-to-day life?
3. Why is it important to understand your own biases and assumptions?
4. What strikes you about the author's experiences of being stereotyped?

5. What is one thing we can do to address stereotyping in our school community, and outside the school gate?
6. How does the media influence the public's perception of racism in Australia?
7. What could the media do to counter racism in Australia?

Post reading

Watch:

- *The Final Quarter* (Shark Island Productions, 2019)

Read the texts:

- *Eded Mer (My Life)* by Thomas Lowah (Brisbane Valley: Rams Skull Press, 1988)
- *Ina's Story: The Memoir of a Torres Strait Islander Woman* by Catherine Titasey (Thursday Island: Catherine Titasey, 2011)
- *A Question of Colour: My Journey to Belonging* by Patricia Lees with Adam C. Lees (Broome: Magabala Books, 2020)

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT

Content description:

- AC9ADR10E02 – Investigate the ways that drama created and/or performed by First Nation Australians celebrates and challenges multiple perspectives of Australian identity.
- AC9HH10K04 – Describe the effects of World War II, with a particular emphasis on continuities and change on the Australian home front – e.g. the role of women and First Nation Australians, and the use of wartime government controls.
- AC9HH10K09 – Explain the causes of First Nation Australians' campaigns for rights and freedoms before 1965, such as discriminatory legislation and policies, the 1938 Day of Mourning and the stolen generations.
- AC9HH10K13 – Describe the continuing efforts in Australia to establish civil rights and freedoms for First Nation Australians, migrants and women.
- AC9HC8K04 – Examine the types of law in Australia, including criminal law and civil law, and the place of First Nation customary law.
- AC9HC10K03 – Explore the role of parliament and the High Court of Australia in protecting rights under the Constitution, common law and through federal and state statute law.

Elaborations:

- considering how global trends in drama influence drama created and/or performed by First Nation Australians;

- investigating specific examples of how contemporary First Nation Australian theatre explores and challenges concepts and histories of Australia and Australian identity;
- comparing and critiquing ways in which contemporary drama and cultural expressions celebrate and challenge influences on Australia's identity;
- evaluating the opportunities and limitations of native title law for First Nation Australians;
- understanding *terra nullius* and how *Native Title Act (1993)* property rights were developed through High Court interpretation of common law and enshrined in statutory law.

Culture

In the Australian Curriculum, *Culture* examines the cultural diversity of the First Nation Australians and First Nation peoples of the Torres Strait and recognises them as belonging to the world's oldest continuous cultures.

Before reading

ACTIVITY

Ask students to engage with the inquiry questions below in relations to the chapters they read in previous activities:

1. How do the authors' voices and experiences capture the diversity of Torres Strait Islander histories, stories and languages?
2. Why is it vital to acknowledge, appreciate and understand the diversity of Torres Strait Islander people and culture?
3. How can I better acknowledge, appreciate, understand and celebrate the diversity of Torres Strait Islander people and culture in my school community, and outside the school gate? What would be the next steps to do this?

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT

Content description:

- AC9E8LE01 – Explain the ways that ideas and points of view may represent the values of individuals and groups in literary texts drawn from historical, social and cultural contexts by First Nation Australian, Australian and world authors.
- AC9E8LE05 – Analyse how language features such as sentence patterns can create tone, and literary devices such as imagery can create meaning and effect.

- AC9E9LE01 – Analyse the representations of people and places in literary texts drawn from historical, social and cultural contexts by First Nation Australian, Australian and world authors.

Elaborations:

- explaining how texts by First Nation Australian authors represent unique ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing;
- recognising that First Nation Australian authors use words and language to set the tone when writing or speaking about specific themes – e.g. by using specific words when writing or speaking about Country/Place;
- analysing how stories written by First Nation Australian authors contemporise or modernise traditional stories, and evaluating the responses of contemporary audiences.

During reading

ACTIVITY

Allocate two chapters to each student group (students should be given different chapters than were allocated to them in previous activities). Depending on the class size, there will be two to four students reading and analysing each chapter.

- How do the authors represent unique ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing in the text?
- What are the perspectives and experiences of the authors in relation to parts of Australian history such as ‘invasion’, ‘colonisation’ and ‘settlement’, and why do they continue to be contested within society today?
- Why is it important to acknowledge and understand the impact of assimilation policies and exclusion (school and social) from the voices and experiences of Torres Strait Islander people?
- What are some events and issues, today and in the past, that have impacted Torres Strait Islander people and cultures?
- Why is it important to appreciate and celebrate the resilience of Torres Strait Islander people and cultures?

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

Content descriptions:

- AC9HP8P02 – Analyse the impact of changes and transitions, and devise strategies to support oneself and others through these changes.
- AC9E10LE01 – Analyse representations of individuals, groups and places, and evaluate how they reflect their context in literary texts by First Nation Australian, Australian and world authors.

- AC9HH9K06 – Analyse the different experiences and perspectives of colonisers, settlers and First Nation Australians and their impact on changes to Australian society’s ideas, beliefs and values.
- AC9HP10P10 – Plan, justify and critique strategies to enhance one’s own and others’ health, safety, relationships and wellbeing.

Elaborations:

- examining the notion of ‘border crossing’ – i.e. how First Nation Australians live across multiple cultures, and how these transitions can have an impact on a sense of belonging to culture, family and peer groups;
- analysing how stories written by First Nation Australian authors contemporise or modernise traditional stories, and evaluating the responses of contemporary audiences;
- describing the impact of changes brought about by non-Indigenous groups on First Nation Australians;
- exploring the perspectives and experiences of First Nation Australians, and discussing terms such as ‘invasion’, ‘colonisation’ and ‘settlement’ in relation to Australian history and why they continue to be contested within society today;
- investigating how the cultural rights of First Nation Australians include maintaining traditional diets and explaining how these have proven health and wellbeing benefits.

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

The *Growing Up Torres Strait Islander in Australia* text can also be used by teachers as a resource for building their own understanding of Torres Strait Islander perspectives and for developing practices in Indigenous education. The following questions can be used by teachers for the purposes of self-reflection:

1. How does race shape my life?
2. How often do I think about race in my day-to-day life?
3. Why is it important to understand my own biases and assumptions as an educator?
4. What strikes me about the authors' experiences of racism and being stereotyped?
5. What is one thing I can do to address my own biases and assumptions? What would be my next steps?
6. What is one thing I can do to address biases and assumption in my school community, and outside the school gate?

The Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has national standards that include two standards relating specifically to Indigenous education. These are:

- **1.4 Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students**
Demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding of the impact of culture, cultural identity, and linguistic background on the education of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds; and
- **2.4 Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians**
Demonstrate broad knowledge of, understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and languages.

For more information about the AITSL standards go to:
<https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards>.

Before using *Growing Up Torres Strait Islander in Australia* as a teaching resource, it is important for teachers to understand the criticality of identity-affirming experiences when teaching Indigenous perspectives in their classrooms. This text uses Torres Strait Islander stories as an opportunity to engage and learn from Torres Strait Islander people and aligns with the Australian Curriculum and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

The authors in this text often speak about their experiences of schooling, including negative experiences; feeling excluded, isolated and disconnected; and experiencing

racism from teachers and/or their peers. The following quotes by John Doolah and Adam C. Lees exemplify the necessity and importance of identity-affirming work from educators supporting young people and their identity:

Like many Indigenous children in Australia, then and now, during my early years of schooling I was excluded from education because of the colonial policies of assimilation that were still embedded in the Australian education system. (p. 164)

Regarding my physical appearance, I've become accustomed to seeing a tidal wave of disappointment wash over people's faces because I don't meet their mental image or expectation of who or what a Torres Strait Islander should be; I'm the opposite. (p. 202)

This collection provides valuable opportunities for teachers and students to learn about the rich fabric of Torres Strait Islander people and cultures.

Further Resources

- Racism. No Way!
<http://www.racismnoway.com.au/>
- Respect, Relationships, Reconciliation
<http://rrr.edu.au/>
- The Healing Foundation's Stolen Generations Resource Kit for Teachers and Students
<https://healingfoundation.org.au/schools/>
- Ngarragunawali: Reconciliation in Education
<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/our-work/narragunawali/>

Antoinette Cole is a proud Torres Strait Islander descendant, with family connections to Boigu Island and Erub (Darnley Island) in the Torres Strait. Antoinette leads with her heart to inspire hope and a shared vision among her colleagues. She advocates for a future where reconciliation endures and where improvements in learning and teaching pave the way for equitable opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students to achieve and celebrate success. She has demonstrated outstanding service within and beyond the Catholic Education community for almost thirty years and has shown integrity as a formidable leader. Antoinette is currently undertaking her PhD at the University of Queensland, focusing on Culturally Responsive School Leadership.