



## Lesson Extensions and Activities for *Stories from the Billabong*

Age Range: 5 - 8 years

Reading Is Fundamental

Google Voyager Folktales Unit

### Book Description

In this collection, you'll discover how Great Mother Snake created and peopled the world with plants and creatures, how the first Waratah was made, why brolgas dance and more. Each tale comes from the rich history of the Yorta-Yorta people, and is illustrated by the Aboriginal artist and storyteller Francis Firebrace, who is known throughout Australia and beyond.

### Folktale Background

According to the authors, the tales featured in *Stories from the Billabong* are some of the oldest stories in the world. They were shared by word of mouth around campfires and waterholes in the Australian desert tens of thousands of years before Tutankhamen was buried in his pyramid. This collection resulted from a group of Aboriginal storytellers collecting the myths and legends of their people and "translating" them into the written word for readers of all ages to enjoy.

### Vocabulary

Uncoil – To straighten or cause to straighten from a curled position.

Billabong – A branch of river forming a backwater or stagnant pool, made by water flowing from the main stream during a flood.

Bush – Wild country (especially in Australia).

Lore – Traditions and knowledge on a subject or held by a particular group, particularly spread by word of mouth.

Cross – Annoyed.

Distraught – Deeply upset and agitated.

Conceited – Excessively proud of oneself.

Bare – Not clothed or covered.

Drab – Lacking brightness or interest

Crevice – A narrow opening, especially in a rock or wall.

Amber – Hard, translucent, fossilized resin produced by extinct coniferous trees of the Tertiary period, typically yellowish in color.

Sinew – A piece of tough, fibrous tissue uniting muscle to bone or bone to bone.

Bunyip – A mythical amphibious monster inhabiting inland waterways.

Feat – An achievement that requires great courage, skill or strength.

Theory – A supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain something, especially one based on principles independent of the thing to be explained.

### Prior to Reading

- Ask students if they have heard any stories set in Australia. Call on volunteers to share the titles of the stories they have heard and to provide an overview of what happens and to whom in each. Note the names of the stories and the characters involved on the whiteboard.
- Walk students through the Australia [Google Voyager Experience](#). Students will learn about where the stories are set.

## While Reading

- Have students illustrate the stories as you read them. By the end of the reading, each student should have an image to represent each of the stories.

## Post Reading Activities

- Have a different student summarize each section and share their illustrations.
- Have students complete the Criss Cross, Memory Matching, and Word Search puzzles about *Stories from the Billabong* on RIF's Literacy Central (<https://www.rif.org/literacy-central>).

## Lesson Extensions and Activities

Here are some ways to further explore the story:

Primary Standard for all activities: RL.K.10 (Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.)

- **Arts** – As *Stories from the Billabong* suggests, the Aboriginal people have a rich art that is full of meaningful symbols. Have students create their own artwork using the symbols shared on pages 60-61 in the book.

Objective: Students will create artwork inspired by a certain style.

Standards: National Core Arts Standards, Anchor Standard #3 (Refine and complete artistic work.)

Materials:

- Markers
  - Backboards
  - Poster boards
  - Colored pencils
  - Construction paper
  - Pencils
  - Magazines that can be cut
  - Scissors
- **Science** – “Why Frogs Can Only Croak” tells the story of how frogs came to make the croaking sound that they make today. Have students explore how sound is made with this head harp experiment from [exploratorium.com](http://exploratorium.com).

Objective: Students will learn about how vibrations produce sound.

Standards: NSES Science as Inquiry Standards Levels K-4 (Abilities necessary to do scientific inquiry; Understanding about scientific inquiry.); NSES Science as Inquiry Standards Level K-4 (Position and motion of objects.)

Materials:

- Pieces of string that are at least 3 feet long
- **Writing** – *Stories from the Billabong* features cultural stories that explain why things are the way they are today. Many different cultures have their own versions of these stories. Have students write their own story in this style by choosing one characteristic of a specific animal and explaining why they think the animal has that characteristic.

Objective: Students will practice creative writing.

Standards: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.3 (Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened.)

Materials:

- Journals
- Pens