

TEACHING NOTES

Come Together



Things Every Aussie Kid Should Know about the First Peoples

Isaiah Firebrace, Illustrated by Jaelyn Biunmaiwai

Teacher notes by Jordyn Green (Wiradjuri, Ngemba and Paakantji woman), Learning to Ngangaanha

Recommended for ages 5+, year levels F–4

SYNOPSIS

Come Together is a heart-warming, debut picture book for children aged 5 and up from pop artist Isaiah Firebrace, inspired by his petition to the Australian Government calling for Aboriginal history to be taught in every classroom.

In this essential book, Isaiah, a Yorta Yorta and Gunditjmara man, establishes a foundation of First Nations knowledge with 20 key topics. Alongside bright and contemporary illustrations by Mununjali and Fijian artist Jaelyn Biunmaiwai, Isaiah connects us to each topic through his own personal story and culture, from the importance of Elders to the Dreaming.

At once accessible and engaging, *Come Together* will make every Aussie kid proud that we are home to the longest continuing culture on Earth!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Australian pop artist Isaiah Firebrace is a proud Yorta Yorta and Gunditjmara man who grew up on the banks of the Murray River. After a childhood of hardship faced by so many in the Aboriginal community, Isaiah's life changed completely after winning *The X Factor* in 2016 on his 17th birthday. With a multi-platinum single under his belt, Isaiah has represented Australia at Eurovision and is a regular across Australian television. His commitment to mentoring and changing the lives of Indigenous youth has seen him tour all corners of the country speaking to young people and offering his personal story of hope and inspiration. His new children's book represents the next chapter in his already remarkable story.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Jaelyn Biunmaiwai is a self-taught illustrator. She is of Mununjali and Fijian ancestry, and creates on Kombumerri Country, Gold Coast. She has a passion for First Nations and Pasifika culture and communities, and this is reflected in the work she does. She is also already a published illustrator, through the book *Heroes, Rebels and Innovators* by Karen Wyld.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Isaiah combines Aboriginal storytelling with the factual information he believes all Australian kids should know about First Nations Peoples. He covers a variety of First Nations concepts such as identity, ceremony, caring for Country, traditional languages and the Dreaming. The book also helps familiarise early learners



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with First Nations vocabulary and terminologies. Each theme is presented on a new page with a large heading, supported with bold and colourful illustrations by Jaelyn.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

Learning areas: English; Humanities and Social Sciences; Health and Physical Education; The Arts; Science; Mathematics; Technologies

General capabilities: Critical and Creative Thinking; Digital Literacy; Ethical Understanding; Intercultural Understanding; Literacy; Numeracy

THEMES

Theme 1: Country

- Acknowledgement and Welcome to Country (pp. 4–5)
- Caring for Country (pp. 10–11)
- Sustainability (pp. 10–11, 22)
- Clans and Language Groups (pp. 20–21)
- Traditional foods (p. 28)
- Totems (p. 22)
- Songlines (p. 16)

Theme 2: Identity

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags (p. 23)
- Skin colour and stereotypes (p. 41)

Theme 3: Storytelling

- The Dreaming and Creation Stories (pp. 12–15)
- Lore - also known as First Law (pp. 7, 10–11, 22, 30)
- Custodial responsibility (pp. 16, 19)
- Music and Dance (pp. 29–30)
- Art (pp. 31–32)

TEACHER PREPARATION & CONSIDERATIONS

- Ensure you are using the most up-to-date and appropriate terminology when referring to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. Use the [Narragunnawali Terminology Guide](#) as a starting point and seek advice from your local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community.
- The [AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia](#) is a great visual resource that helps students (especially young students) understand that there are hundreds of First Nations language, social and nation groups. Please note that this map shows only the general locations of larger groupings of people which may include clans, dialects or individual languages in a group. It used published resources from the eighteenth century-1994 and is not intended to be exact, nor the boundaries fixed.



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COMPREHENSION

Before reading

- Access Prior knowledge:
 - Who are the First Peoples of Australia?
 - What do you already know about the First Peoples of Australia?
 - Do you know anything about the author of this book – Isaiah Firebrace?
- Unpack the Vocabulary:
 - Country – a term often used by First Nations peoples to describe the sky, land and waterways to which they are connected to.
 - Elders – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are highly respected for their cultural knowledge and contributions to their communities. Age alone does not determine whether someone is recognised as an Elder.
 - Mob – used by First Nations peoples to describe a family group, clan group or wider community group. It can be used to connect and identify who a First Nations person is and where they are from (e.g. ‘Who’s your mob?’).

During reading

- Use the [AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia](#) to identify where all First Nations groups mentioned in the text are located in Australia – starting with Isaiah’s mobs (Yorta Yorta and Gunditjmara).

After reading

- Literal:
 - What is the difference between an Acknowledgement of Country and a Welcome to Country?
 - Is it a sign of respect to refer to an Elder as ‘Aunty’ or ‘Uncle’, even if you are not related to them?
 - Before colonisation, how many First Nations languages and dialects were spoken?
- Inferential:
 - What are some ways First Nations peoples care for Country?
 - Traditionally, First Nations people did not write in books to record information. How did First Nations people store and pass on information to younger generations?
- Applied knowledge:
 - How can you care for and protect the plants and animals at your school?
 - On page 14, Isaiah shares a special story that his dad told him when he was a young boy. Have your parents, grandparents, aunties or uncles told you a special story that is important to them?



WRITING ACTIVITIES

- **Be Brave! Make Change!**: Isaiah was crowned the winner of the eighth season of The X Factor Australia in 2016, and in 2017 he represented Australia in the Eurovision Song Contest Grand Final. In 2020, Isaiah created a petition for more Aboriginal history to be taught in Australian schools and in 2021, he presented his petition (with over 289,000 signatures) to the Australian Government. His petition called for the Australian government to implement Aboriginal history classes in primary and secondary schools across the country. Create a [Yarning Circle](#) for students to share their thoughts about this. Ask your students if they have enjoyed learning about the oldest surviving cultures in the world today. Would they like to learn more? If so, create a poster or letter as a class to inform your school principal or state/territory Minister for Education that your students agree with Isaiah and want to learn more about First Nations peoples and cultures at school.
- **Mind map of Learning**: Create a mind map with the title of the book, *Come Together*, written in the centre. Ask students to reflect on what they have learnt since reading the book and add this knowledge to the mind map. You can group concepts together in themes (e.g. Country, identity, significant celebrations) as well as make connections between concepts by linking them together with a line. Compare this mind map to what students said they knew about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at the beginning of the lesson.
- **Create an Acknowledgement of Country**: As a class, create a unique and meaningful [Acknowledgement of Country](#) specific for the traditional lands where your school is located. You can make your Acknowledgement of Country into a sign and display this sign on your classroom door or on a highly visible wall in your classroom.
- **Compare and Contrast**: Use a Venn Diagram to compare the Creation Story that Isaiah shares on page 14, with a Dreaming or Creation story from your local area. Alternatively, you could use another story from another area - just make sure to identify this group on the [AIATSIS Map of Australia](#). This activity will help students to understand that different groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have their own [Dreaming](#) and beliefs, and that sometimes these stories connect with (or are similar to) stories from other groups.
- **Student Podcast**: Support students in writing a script for, and voice record, a 'podcast' with a partner about the book that explores the importance of Australian school-aged children learning about the First Peoples of Australia. You can listen to a children's podcast together as a class as an example if students have not listened to a podcast before.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- **Kahoot!**: Use [Kahoot](#) to create a fun online quiz about the book for your students to complete individually or in pairs (sharing a device).
- **Human Timeline**: Aboriginal people in Australia have the oldest continuous cultures in the world! Support students to understand how long Aboriginal people have lived on this continent by creating a human timeline. You will need a big open space, and some signs (to be held by students) that say 'Today', 'When the First Fleet arrived', 'The earliest evidence of Aboriginal people in Australia' and 'The earliest evidence of Torres Strait Islander people in the Torres Strait'. You can add signs for any other significant dates (such as the estimate of when Mungo Man and Mungo Lady were alive... 42,000 years ago!). Establish where the timeline will start and then position students accordingly along the timeline to indicate how long ago each of these events were.
- **Make an Australian banknote for Isaiah**: Ngarrindjeri man David Unaipon is the only First Nations person included on an Australian banknote. He was one of our earliest and greatest inventors. Show students an example of the [\\$50 banknote](#). Explore the other design elements surrounding the illustration of David Unaipon (e.g. the shields from Unaipon's Ngarrindjeri nation).



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- We learn a lot about Isaiah Firebrace in his book *Come Together*. Support students to design another Australian banknote that includes design elements that celebrate Isaiah's achievements. Consider who his mobs are, the things he is passionate about and his achievements so far (e.g. as a singer, writer and advocate).
- **Traditional Place Names Map:** Create a class map of your local area and research traditional place names to add to your map (e.g. the traditional names for nearby mountains, rivers, towns). Display this map in your classroom.
- **A School Songline:** Read the information on page 16 about songlines. Isaiah describes songlines as 'musical maps' of the land. Help students create a song that describes the way from one area of the school to another (e.g. from your classroom to your school library). Students will have to consider what objects, structures or landmarks they will use in their song to support their directions. Extend on this learning activity by asking students to create a map of their route.
- **Seasons:** Research information about the traditional Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander seasons of your local area. Convey this information to students, who can then design a seasonal calendar. Compare this calendar to the western four-season calendar used in Australia. If your local community does not have a traditional seasonal calendar as such, you can research the [Noongar seasonal calendar](#) mentioned in the book instead (page 25). Explore how First Nations people knew when the next season was approaching.
- **Authentic Art:** *Come Together* informs readers that there are many different styles of Aboriginal art – not just dot paintings as many people think! Create a classroom display with your students that shows different styles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. Ensure the art you choose has permission to be shared (e.g. not posted without permission by non-Indigenous tourists). Contact local Aboriginal (or Torres Strait Islander if you live in the Torres Strait) artists in your community to arrange an incursion at your school. What is the 'style' of art traditionally created by First Nations people in your area, and how has this developed over time?
- **Marngrook:** Use the [Yulunga](#) resource to learn about and play traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander games – particularly [Marngrook](#). Purchase a [possum skin ball](#) (if in stock) to visually demonstrate how Aboriginal people used animal skins to create balls for games.
- **Learn about Language:** Learn how to say 'hello', 'goodbye' and 'thank you' in the local First Nations language of your area. Some languages may not have translations for these words. Respectfully ask traditional language speakers from your local community which words you can learn instead.
- **Yarn with an Elder:** Arrange for a local Elder to spend some time with your students. Read *Come Together with* Aunty/Uncle. Encourage students to ask relevant questions about each topic during or after the reading of the book. Don't forget to compensate Elders for the time they spend with you and the knowledge they share!



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AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM (VERSION 9) OUTCOMES

English	
Foundation	AC9EFLA07 , AC9EFLE01
Year 1	AC9E1LA08 , AC9E1LA09 , AC9E1LE01 , AC9E1LE02
Year 2	AC9E2LA01 , AC9E2LA08 , AC9E2LA09 , AC9E2LE01 , AC9E2LY01
Year 3	AC9E3LA09 , AC9E3LA10 , AC9E3LE01
Year 4	AC9E4LE01
Mathematics	
Foundation	AC9MFSP02
Year 1	AC9M1SP02 , AC9M1M03
Year 2	AC9M2SP02
Year 3	AC9M3SP02 , AC9M3M02
Year 4	AC9M4SP02 , AC9M4M02
HASS	
Foundation	AC9HSFK02 , AC9HSFK03 , AC9HSFK04
Year 1	AC9HS1K04 ,
Year 2	AC9HS2K02 , AC9HS2K04
Year 3	AC9HS3K02 , AC9HS3K03 , AC9HS3K04 , AC9HS3K06 , AC9HS3K07
Year 4	AC9HS4K01 , AC9HS4K04 , AC9HS4K06 , AC9HS4K07 , AC9HS4K08 , AC9HS4K09
Science	
Foundation	AC9SFU02 , AC9SFU03 , AC9SFH01
Year 1	AC9S1U02 , AC9S1H01
Year 2	AC9S2U02 , AC9S2U03 , AC9S2H01
Year 3	N/A
Year 4	AC9S4U03 , AC9S4U04
The Arts	
Foundation	AC9ADAFE01 , AC9AMUFE01 , AC9AMUFC01 , AC9AVAFE01
Years 1–2	AC9ADA2E01 , AC9ADA2E02 , AC9AMU2E01 , AC9AMU2E02 , AC9AMU2P01 , AC9AVA2E01 , AC9AVA2E02
Years 3–4	AC9ADA4E01 , AC9ADA4E02 , AC9AMU4E01 , AC9AMU4E02 , AC9AMU4P01 , AC9AVA4E01 , AC9AVA4E02
Health and Physical Education	
Foundation	AC9HPFP01 , AC9HPFM01 , AC9HPFM02
Years 1–2	AC9HP2P01 , AC9HP2M01 , AC9HP2M02
Years 3–4	AC9HP4P01 , AC9HP4M01 , AC9HP4M02
Technologies	
Foundation	AC9TDEFK01
Years 1–2	AC9TDE2K01 , AC9TDE2K04
Years 3–4	AC9TDE4K04



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RELATED READING

Books

The First Scientists: Deadly Inventions and Innovations from Australia's First Peoples

Corey Tutt

Illustrated by Blak Douglas

Looking after Country with Fire: Aboriginal Burning Knowledge with Uncle Kuu

Victor Steffensen

Illustrated by Sandra Steffensen

Finding Our Heart: A Story about the Uluru Statement for Young Australians

Thomas Mayor

Illustrated by Blak Douglas

Welcome to Country: An Introduction to our First Peoples for Young Australians

Marcia Langton

Our Home, Our Heartbeat

Adam Briggs

Illustrated by Kate Moon

Artwork by Rachael Sarra

Coming Home to Country

Bronwyn Bancroft

Somebody's Land

Adam Goodes & Ellie Laing

Illustrated by David Hardy

Young Dark Emu: A Truer History

Bruce Pascoe

Welcome to Country

Aunty Joy Murphy

Illustrated by Lisa Kennedy

Marngrook

Titta Secombe

Illustrated by Grace Fielding

Websites

Narragunnawali Terminology Guide

<https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/about/terminology-guide>

AIATSIS Map of Australia

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia>

