

A bright, shiny day

LINKS TO:

Stage 3, Module 12

Learning Object 2: *Plan a camp*

Exercise 1

Sample answers:

- 1.1 Think about how earlier generations understood the weather and the land. What traditional sayings or stories reflected their knowledge of weather patterns and helped them to prepare for changes in the weather and the seasons?**

I am familiar with a range of European stories that include images and metaphors relating to landscape and climate. For example, my parents often tell stories about the green man, who is a type of nature spirit. One of my favourite stories is the story of Blodeuwedd. It is a Welsh story about a woman who is made out of flowers. She eventually turns into an owl. The story includes knowledge about each of the different flowers she is made from, such as where they grow and how they are propagated, as well as the habitat and hunting techniques of owls.

I know some Australian stories that strongly feature the Australian landscape and climate, such as Henry Lawson's short story 'The Drover's Wife', many of Banjo Patterson's poems, and novels such as Eleanor Dark's *The Timeless Land*, Jeannie Gunn's *We of the Never Never*, Colin Thiele's *Storm Boy* and Patrick White's *Tree of Man*.

Many of these stories focus on either the large inland desert areas of Australia, remote farming communities or native bushland.

Whenever black cockatoos fly over our house, Dad says it's a sure sign of rain coming.

My grandmother says that when cows lie down it will rain within three days. If the horses lie down there are rainstorms on the way, and if the horses run wild there is wild weather coming.

- 1.2 On what elements of the landscape and climate does Dorothea Mackellar focus in her poem? In what ways are these features similar to the Australian landscape and climate with which you are familiar?**

This extract from Dorothea Mackellar's poem seems to be about an inland farming area of Australia, since it mentions cattle dying from lack of water.

Mackellar mentions blue sky. Most of the time, the sky where I live is blue, although I wouldn't describe it as 'pitiless'.

Mackellar's poem seems to be about the cycle of drought and rain that largely affects inland areas of Australia. Where I live, even though the seasons could be described as wet and dry, we are rarely directly affected by sustained drought.

- 1.3 With which aspects of the Australian landscape are you most familiar? Describe the landscape and climate of the area where you live.**

I live in south-east Queensland. The climate here is subtropical, which means that we have warm, wet summers and cool, dry winters.

We live in a coastal area, with the sea to the east. The south-east is largely contained by a range of ancient volcanic mountains, including the Glasshouse Mountains.

The landscape was once dominated by cedar forests, but these were largely harvested during the early days of European settlement.

There are also pockets of remnant rainforest in the area, most of which are now protected in national parks.

1.4 Summarise your understanding of local Aboriginal knowledge of landscape and climate.

I know some Aboriginal stories about hunting and landscape formation that reflect local knowledge of the landscape, flora and fauna. For example, I have heard one story at a local storytelling event, about warriors going out to hunt dugongs for a feast. The story includes information about the climate, the tides and the habits of the manatee.

I have also heard some local stories about the formation of the river where my family and I often go fishing or water-skiing. According to a local Indigenous man, the riverbed was formed by a snake during the Dreaming.

1.5 What values, attitudes and beliefs inform traditional Indigenous ways of understanding or writing about Australian landscape and climate? Give reasons to support your answer.

I believe that traditional Indigenous ways of understanding Australian landscape and climate are strongly based on an intimate and personal knowledge of the land, which is often expressed in narratives, or stories, including Dreaming stories. These stories reflect a range of values. Some of the dominant values reflected in these stories include the need for people to respect the landscape and to treasure our relationship with it. Indigenous understanding of the landscape, or country, is also strongly imbued with the belief that the land is not owned by people, but rather that people are its guardians. This is reflected in the belief that people have obligations to the land, as well as rights, such as hunting or camping privileges.

The songlines are another way that traditional Indigenous people describe and map the landscape of Australia. The songlines reflect a belief that the land can be described effectively in this way. The fact that different language groups are responsible for different elements of the songlines reflects a belief in the collaborative responsibility for caring for and working with the land.

The Indigenous Dreaming narratives also reflect a belief in a period when the landscape of Australia was formed through the actions of magical and ordinary creatures, including men and animals. These stories teach us how the landscape was formed, and how it should be managed. This reflects the value placed on narratives as both a way of remembering important stories, as well as a way of teaching each generation about the land and the heritage of the people who live in Australia.

Exercise 2

Sample answers:

2.1 What Indonesian stories or sayings are you familiar with that reflect local or traditional knowledge of the landscape and climate?

There are many stories from all over Indonesia that reflect local or traditional knowledge of the landscape. From my research on the Internet, I found that typically:

- they are set in a kingdom
- the stories often relate to the origin of a place
- they include moral lessons
- they are passed on orally
- they contain elements of local culture.

I read two stories on the Internet, the legend of *Danau Toba* and the legend of *Selat Bali*, that tell how Toba lake in North Sumatra and the channel between Java and Bali were formed.

I am not familiar with many Indonesian sayings or stories about climate. I know that Indonesians believe that when frogs start to call repeatedly it will soon rain, and that if a white ring appears around the moon it will rain the next day. Indonesians also believe that if you want to stop the rain you should throw your underwear onto the roof of your house.

2.2.1 Which aspects of the landscape or climate featured in this poem reflect your prior understanding of Indonesian landscape or climate?

In Indonesia, people believe that when you get caught in the rain or *kehujan* you will suffer from what they call *masuk angin*. Basically, *masuk angin* means that you are about to get a cold. Because Indonesia is located in the tropics, the changes in the seasons can cause a lot of colds. The description of what happens in Ambon when there is heavy rain while the weather is hot reflects this aspect of human culture and climate. I think the story warns that people — especially children — should be careful not to come out during heavy rain when it happens at the same time as hot weather, not because *Nenek Luhu* will kidnap them, but because they might catch a cold.

2.2.2 Which aspects of the landscape or climate featured in the text have extended your understanding of Indonesian landscape or climate?

This story has extended my understanding of how several places in and around Ambon in Maluku got their names.

One thing that I find interesting is the belief that the hat the princess was wearing fell and was transformed into a rock: *Batu Capeu*. I consulted the Internet to see what this rock looks like and I found that it does actually look like a hat! I liked the way the local story ended with an image that you can see in the landscape if you have an opportunity to go there. It makes the story more exciting and interesting, and even lends it a kind of authority because you can go and look at the mountain and say, 'See, why else would a mountain look like a hat?'

2.3 What values, attitudes and beliefs inform traditional ways of understanding or writing about Indonesian landscape and climate? Give reasons to support your answer.

A lot of the traditional ways that Indonesian people understand and describe landscape and climate reflect an interest in the way landscapes are formed, and how

the seasons and climate came into being and affect people's lives. For example, the story of *Selat Bali*, is a narrative about how the channel between Java and Bali was formed. This reflects the importance of the natural landscape in the local people's lives.

Exercise 3

Sample answers:

3.1 What similarities and differences are there between the ways Indigenous Australians and Indonesian people traditionally represent their local landscape and climate?

Some of the traditional stories of Indonesia and of Indigenous Australians are similar in that they are stories about how humans interacted with and even became part of their landscape. For example, in the story from Maluku, the princess's hat becomes the rock, *Batu Capeu*, while in the Indigenous story about Mount Tibrogargan, it is the transformed body of the man Tibrogargan. Both cultures have stories or other forms of knowledge that draw on an intimate knowledge of local wildlife. For example, in Indonesia, people believe that when frogs start calling repeatedly it is going to rain. This knowledge clearly comes from living in and observing the landscape and climate over a long period of time.

3.2 How do these differences and similarities reflect differences and similarities between Indonesian and Australian cultural values, attitudes and beliefs?

Both of the narrative traditions share a concern with the natural landscape, particularly in terms of how it was formed, and how people should and can interact with the environment. Both narrative traditions, in other words, share a concern with educating the community about the history of the landscape, and people's environmental rights and responsibilities.

The stories are different in that the Indonesian stories are often about a kingdom with princes and princesses, whereas the Indigenous Australian stories are often about ordinary people — husbands,

wives, hunters and so on. This perhaps reflects the history of the people who told these stories and the differences in the way their societies were politically organised. For example, before 1788, Australia was home to a wide range of different language groups, each of whom had different narrative traditions and languages. Although many groups had a leader, they were not called kingdoms and did not have kings (or princesses), although they were often hierarchical, with people treated differently according to their class and gender.

For example, some Indigenous knowledge about landscape is expressed in songlines. Songs are not a traditional or familiar way of expressing knowledge for most white Australians.

I believe an ethical approach to understanding and relating to the local landscape and to Indigenous people would in part rely on respecting and valuing their deep knowledge of country.

Exercise 4

Sample answer:

4.1 What values or assumptions inform the way we respond to different ways of communicating knowledge, particularly about climate and landscape?

I think that, generally, white Australians tend to value contemporary, scientific descriptions of landscape and climate as more accurate and reliable than local Indigenous knowledge. In other words, we assume that scientific, Western explanations for climate and landscape are more accurate than other explanations.

However, many white Australians do understand that Indigenous Australians have a deep understanding of the landscape, and some understanding of traditional land management practices, such as firestick farming.

On the whole, however, I think that white Australians tend to undervalue Indigenous ways of expressing knowledge, or to place less importance on them than more familiar ways of knowing.