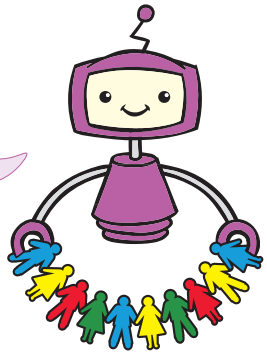
MODULE 12: WORK SHEET 1

A bright, shiny day

Most of us are familiar with scientific weather reports, forecasts and research but, before the advent of barometers, anemometers and hygrometers, we used different language and stories to describe and explain the weather and the landscape. Let's find out more ...



LINKS TO:
Stage 3, Module 12
Learning Object 2: *Plan a camp*

PRIOR LEARNING:

Stage 1
Module 6 Work Sheet 1: *The story of the kangaroo*

Stage 2
Module 5 Work Sheet 4: *Telling tales*

Stage 3
Module 7 Work Sheet 4: *There's no place like home*

1 Singing up the country

Australia has a mixed heritage of stories and images about weather and landscape. Some of that heritage comes from our links with Europe, particularly with England, but there are also more ancient and local ways of describing and engaging with the landscape.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia have lived on this continent for tens of thousands of years. Their knowledge of its climate and geography is based on an ethic of care for the landscape, a deep understanding of the areas in which they live, including the diversity of plant and animal life, the physical environment, and the climate and ecology of Australia.

Aboriginal people's relationships to the land are also firmly based on a spiritual attachment to the land.

Two ways in which this deep knowledge is recorded are in stories and in artworks.

Tiddalik

One of the most famous Aboriginal weather-related stories is the story of Tiddalik (or Molok) the frog.

The Gunai people in the South Gippsland area in Victoria told their story to ethnographers, who wrote it down.

One morning, Tiddalik was thirsty, so he began to drink and drink and drink. Soon, he had drunk all the fresh water. All around him other creatures and plants began to die from lack of water.

Nabunum went to Tiddalik and began contorting himself into all kinds of weird and wonderful shapes. First Tiddalik smiled, and then he laughed. Soon, he opened his mouth so wide that all of the water in his belly rushed out, replenishing the lakes, swamps and rivers.

The story of Tiddalik is probably based on the water-holding frog. It is a simple story but it also teaches the listener about the cycles of drought and plenty, in terms of water.

Mapping the landscape

Many Indigenous artworks are representations of the landscapes; in other words, they are maps. Most of these artworks show a landscape as if viewed from overhead. The artworks are symbolic. They usually include certain shapes or types of lines to represent particular features of the landscape, such as waterholes, water soaks, rivers, meeting places, hunting grounds, bush tucker and so on. For example, the presence of emus might be shown through arrow-like 'tracks', while textured stippling is used to show the presence of grasses and wild foods, and small circles denote shady trees.

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Songlines describe routes across the land that were first taken during the Dreaming. The paths of the songlines are recorded in traditional songs, stories, dance and painting.

The songs describe the locations of landmarks, waterholes and other features of the land. By singing the songs, different Indigenous groups can navigate each others' traditional lands, even the lands of those who speak different languages and have different cultural traditions.

2 *Cerita rakyat*

As the world's largest archipelago, Indonesia is home to hundreds of ethnic groups with diverse languages and cultures. One of the cultural heritages of the country is *cerita rakyat*, a form of folklore that is usually connected to a particular province or region in Indonesia. *Cerita rakyat* are oral stories that explain events or establish moral lessons. There are several well-known *cerita rakyat* that describe how a certain landscape was formed.

One example is the legend of *Gunung Tangkuban Perahu* from West Java. It tells of a princess who did not really want to marry a particular knight so she set a series of impossible tasks for him to complete by dawn. However, the knight had magical powers and almost completed all the tasks before the princess pounded her pestle and woke the rooster. The rooster's crow indicated that it was morning, but the knight still had part of a boat to finish. Angry and disappointed, he threw the boat away from him; it landed the wrong way up and became the *Tangkuban Perahu* mountain. People who visit the mountain can see that it looks like an upside-down boat.

Pranata Mangsa

Apart from *cerita rakyat,* traditional Javanese society has developed a farming almanac, which is used to predict the weather. It is called *Pranata Mangsa* in Javanese or *Pedoman Musim* in Indonesian, which means 'guide to the seasons'. The almanac is based on agricultural practices in Java. It divides the solar year into twelve periods of unequal length. The *Pranata Mangsa* provides information about when to expect rain and drought, when crops flower or bear fruit, the position of the stars and the influence of the full moon. This almanac was handed down in oral form until, in 1856, it was codified by Pakubuwono VII, the king of Surakarta at the time.

Pranata Mangsa incorporates information and traditions that underlie the socio-economic and socio-cultural life of the Javanese people. It reflects a belief that the human psyche is strongly connected to the climate and environment. Its importance in Javanese life, especially farming life, reflects the importance of spirituality in Javanese agricultural society.

Unfortunately, however, modern Javanese society tends to ignore this traditional farming technique. The knowledge embedded in *Pranata Mangsa* is under threat of being forgotten because of the impact of globalisation, the long-term effects of capitalism and the impact of modern technology.

Exercises

Exercise 1

Let's think a little more about how Australians have traditionally described or explained Australian weather and weather patterns.

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?

Hint! Do you know any old-fashioned stories, nursery rhymes or sayings about the weather? Does an older person you know, for example, say they know it is going to rain if their hair goes curly, or if their joints start to ache, or if trails of ants come inside the house?

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1.2 The following is an extract from a famous poem by Dorothea Mackellar called 'My Country'. The poem was first published in 1908.

Core of my heart, my country!
Her pitiless blue sky,
When sick at heart, around us,
We see the cattle die —
But then the grey clouds gather,
And we can bless again
The drumming of an army,
The steady, soaking rain.

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

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

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1.4 Research local Aboriginal narratives or artworks that describe the climate or landscape where you live.

Summarise your understanding of this local Aborginal knowledge of landscape or climate.

Hint! If you are in a classroom situation, you could discuss this in groups or with your teacher. If you are an independent learner, you may be able to access information online.

In some areas, traditional knowledge may have been lost. In that case, you could research and write about Indigenous knowledge of another area in your state.

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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.

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Exercise 2

Now let's think about traditional or 'folk' knowledge about landscape and climate in Indonesia.

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

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2.2 Read the following extract from an Indonesian story from Maluku, which features the local environment, and then answer the questions that follow.

Pada jaman penjajajahan Belanda, ada sebuah kerajaan bernama Luhu di Pulau Seram, Maluku. Raja yang memerintah bernama Raja Luhu. Dia mempunyai seorang anak perempuan yang cantik jelita yang bernama Puteri Negeri Luhu dan dua orang anak laki-laki.

Kabar tentang kekayaan kerajaan Luhu terdengar oleh penjajah Belanda yang kemudian berniat untuk mengambil alih kekuasaan di sana. Pasukan Belanda datang dan terjadi perang besar di kerajaan Luhu. Pada akhirnya tentara Belanda menang dan semua anggota keluarga kerajaan Luhu dibunuh, kecuali puteri raja yang dibawa oleh penjajah Belanda ke Ambon untuk dijadikan istri panglima perang Belanda.

Puteri Negeri Luhu tidak mau menikah dengan panglima perang Belanda. Karena dia terus menerus disiksa, dia berusaha melarikan diri dan berhasil. Dia kemudian sampai ke kerajaan Soya dan di sana dia diterima dan diperlakukan dengan baik. Setelah beberapa lama tinggal di kerajaan Soya, Puteri Negeri Luhu sadar bahwa dia hamil. Karena tidak ingin merepotkan raja Soya, Puteri mencuri seekor kuda dan melarikan diri. Ketika raja Soya sadar bahwa Puteri hilang dari istana, dia mengutus sebuah rombongan besar untuk mencari Puteri.

Dalam perjalanannya, Puteri sampai di sebuah puncak gunung yang ditumbuhi pohon jambu. Karena lapar, dia makan beberapa buah jambu.Tiba-tiba dia mendengar suara banyak orang yang memanggil-manggil namanya. Karena tidak mau ditemukan, Puteri lari dan waktu orang-orang itu sampai di puncak gunung, mereka hanya menemukan kulit jambu yang dimakan oleh Puteri. Rombongan itu kemudian menamakan gunung itu ‘Gunung Nona’.

Puteri Negeri Luhu terus melarikan kudanya dengan kencang. Karena terlalu kencang, topinya terbang dan jatuh di tanah. Konon, topi itu kemudian menjelma menjadi sebuah batu yang disebut ‘Batu Capeu’. Setelah beberapa lama naik kuda, Puteri akhirnya sampai di kota Ambon. Di sana dia menemukan sebuah mata air. Puteri dan kudanya segera minum air dari mata air itu sepuasnya. Konon, karena itulah mata air itu kemudian diberi nama ‘Air Putri’.

Puteri beristirahat sebentar di mata air itu, tetapi tiba-tiba dia mendengar lagi suara orang-orang yang mencarinya itu. Karena terlalu lelah, dia tidak sempat lari lagi dan orang-orang itu berhasil menangkapnya. Puteri memohon agar tidak dikembalikan ke kerajaan Soya, karena dia tidak mau merepotkan raja dan keluarganya. Ketika seorang pengawal hendak menarik tangannya, Puteri tiba-tiba menghilang secara gaib.

Sejak peristiwa itu, setiap kali hujan turun bersamaan dengan cuaca panas, seringkali ada warga — terutama anak-anak — yang menghilang. Menurut kepercayaan masyarakat setempat, anak-anak yang hilang itu diambil oleh Nenek Luhu yang merupakan penjelmaan dari Puteri Negeri Luhu. Walaupun demikian, tidak ada yang bisa menjelaskan mengapa Nenek Luhu suka mengganggu penduduk Ambon, terutama anak-anak.

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

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

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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.

Exercise 3

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

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

Hint! Is your response informed by a cultural bias towards written texts over oral texts, or scientific explanations over narrative ones?

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Exercise 4

The following question asks you to think critically about some of the issues that surround different ways of expressing and representing knowledge.

4.1 There are many ways to communicate knowledge — in story, song, art, drama or non-fiction. What values or assumptions influence how we respond to different ways of communicating knowledge, particularly about climate and landscape?

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