

## LINKS TO:

Stage 2, Module 5

Learning Object 3: Storytelling

Sample answers: individual answers will vary.

### Exercise 1

#### What storytelling traditions did you grow up with in your home?

In my home, we are avid readers and love a good story. When we were little, my parents read to me and my siblings every night before bed. When we were older, my siblings and I would read chapter books each night before falling asleep. My father and grandfather love to tell stories and, when camping, or on my grandfather's farm, we often tell stories around the campfire. My grandfather has many stories about the old days and funny stories about living on a cattle station. And my father loves to tell us scary stories when we are camping or bush walking.

### Exercise 2

#### What storytelling traditions in Australia (including oral storytelling) are you familiar with?

In Australia we commonly:

- tell bedtime stories to children, either orally or by using picture books; these are often fairytales, nursery rhymes or stories that teach children a lesson or moral, for example about friendship
- tell spooky stories or sing songs around a campfire
- read or listen to chapter books at school, or read chapter books for enjoyment at home
- listen to or compose songs that narrate a story.

### Exercise 3

#### What folktales, fables, fairytales and myths are you familiar with?

- Aboriginal storytelling traditions such as the Dreaming
- Fairytales such as *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Cinderella*, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*
- Fables such as *The Tortoise and the Hare*
- Myths, such as those from Greek mythology about the gods and supernatural beings such as Zeus, Hercules, Medusa and Apollo.

### Exercise 4

#### Where do these stories come from?

The Dreaming stories are Aboriginal narratives from Australia.

Almost all of the myths, fables and fairytales I know come from Europe.

### Exercise 5

#### What types of Australian stories exist?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures share a strong oral storytelling tradition which, since European settlement, has also grown to include literary (or written) stories. The stories of the Dreaming are about the past and the present, and are used by the elders within a community to educate young people about laws and traditions. These stories help to explain how the land came to be shaped and inhabited; how to behave and why; where to find certain foods, and so on. Stories from the Dreaming have been handed down over thousands of years. They are not owned by an individual, though often one person — a custodian — is responsible for the stories during each generation. While some stories are shared widely within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and even with white people, others are part of secret, sacred traditions. There are, for example, sacred stories associated with men's initiation rituals, and sacred women's stories. Many Dreaming stories include humour, as well as spirit beings and talking animals.

Australia has a strong tradition of children's stories that feature flora and fauna as characters, such as *Snugglepot and Cuddlepie* by May Gibbs, *Storm Boy* by Colin Thiele, and *Possum Magic* by Mem Fox.

Famous bush poetry ballads, such as *The Man from Snowy River* and *The Man from Ironbark* by Banjo Patterson are learnt by most school children. They celebrate the colonial period in Australia, are largely set in rural areas and are often broadly comic 'tall tales'. Other Australian poets drew on the bush poetry tradition but used urban settings, such as CJ Dennis who was known as 'the laureate of the larrikin'.

Australia also has a tradition of stories about white Australians dealing with the hardships of early settler society. Henry Lawson's short story, *The Drover's Wife*

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is an example, with its depiction of a drover's wife alone with her children in a bark hut. Lawson's character is one in a tradition of strong female characters in Australian fiction.

*Waltzing Matilda* is a classic Australian folk song, known by most Australians. It is sometimes referred to as Australia's unofficial national anthem. Like many celebrated Australian stories, it focuses on a person who is down on his luck (an itinerant worker during the depression, or swagman). Like the historic icon Ned Kelly, the main character in *Waltzing Matilda* breaks the law, but is treated affectionately in the narrative.

Many Australian narratives celebrate qualities such as larrikinism, lightheartedness, courage and friendship.

## Exercise 6

### Why do you think certain stories continue to be passed down from generation to generation?

Storytelling in Australia is a form of entertainment and education. We like to be transported to another place and time and to lose ourselves in a good story. We like to keep the past alive, and, although our beliefs may have changed, we still like to listen to the myths and legends that explain the creation and evolution of the world around us and our place in the world.

Stories can remind us of who we are and where we come from. Stories from the Dreaming, which contain messages about respecting the land and our connection to it, are relevant for everyone in today's society. Storytelling is a way of passing on our history to future generations.

## Exercise 7

### What values, attitudes and beliefs are reflected in Indonesian storytelling traditions?

Stories are an important part of Indonesian oral tradition and have been passed down from generation to generation. The original creators are unknown and several variants of the texts generally exist because the stories have been passed down orally. On the other hand, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* epics, adopted when the influence of the ancient Indian civilisation spread throughout South-East Asia, can be traced back to written roots. However, these stories have been adapted locally in different countries throughout the region.

Indonesians value storytelling as a form of education and entertainment, as well as a means of developing wisdom and a sense of local or national identity. We know that storytelling, whether oral or written, is still an important part of Indonesian society, with young children listening to and learning about fairytales and fables at school

## Exercise 8

### How are storytelling traditions in Indonesian similar to or different from storytelling traditions in Australia? Why do you think this is?

All fairytales, no matter where they originate, share common traditions, such as individuals overcoming enormous odds or powerful entities, before living happily ever after; good triumphing over evil; or animals turning into humans after overcoming some immense personal challenge. Indonesian stories share these traditions as well. From a cultural perspective, the only difference is that, in Indonesia, the events depicted in these stories are set in villages and forests rather than in medieval townships and large palaces. Therefore, thematically at least, Indonesian fairytales are similar to Australian fairytales of European origin.

Indonesian myths also have some parallels to the stories of the Dreaming that tell the history and culture of Australia's Indigenous peoples. The story of Hainuwele, the coconut girl, from the Maluku Islands, is the Indonesian variant of the creation myth. Another element of the Indonesian storytelling tradition, which mirrors that of Indigenous Australians, is that it was spread and perpetuated by word-of-mouth rather than as written text.

A significant part of Indonesia's storytelling tradition finds its roots in the civilisation of ancient India, particularly on the islands of Java and Bali where the epics of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* are still routinely performed through puppetry and live theatre. These epics, although common throughout South-East Asia, are foreign to Australia with its European storytelling tradition.