

Family Tree

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Study Notes, Discussion Points, and Activities

- 1) Before reading the story, as a class look closely at the cover and title, and discuss what you can learn about the book from the artwork, and from the name of the story. Some things that you might like to include in your discussion could be:
 - What can you see happening on the front cover of the book?
 - Who is the author, and who is the illustrator? How can we tell this?
 - What is the title of the story?
 - What do you think a family tree is?
 - Read the writing on the back cover: what do you think that it means?
 - What can you see happening in the background of the cover artwork?
 - Can you identify the types of tree and plants shown on the cover? Where are these trees native to?
 - What animals can you see on the cover of the book?
 - Where do you think that this story might be set, and what about the cover artwork makes you think this?
 - What do you think might happen in this story? Why do you think this?

- 2) In the story, the tree says that its *roots dug deep*.
 - Why is it important for a tree's roots to be deep?
 - What might happen to a tree that has shallow roots?
 - What do we mean when we use this expression figuratively to talk of people having roots dug deep?
 - Could we say the same thing about people without using figurative language, and if so, how?
 - What other phrases or expressions can you find in the story that are literally true when referring to the tree, but can also be interpreted figuratively when talking about people?

- 3) Go for a walk in your local area, and see if you can locate a eucalyptus tree.
 - If you can't locate a eucalyptus tree, instead look for another native tree, bush or plant.
 - Look at the ground surrounding the tree, and see if you can locate any gum nuts or other seeds that have fallen from the tree or plant.
 - Collect leaves, twigs, and even sprays of leaves, or curls of bark, from the ground near your chosen tree. Do not pull any off the tree or damage it!
 - When you return to class, arrange your leaves in a jar, or on a piece of white paper in an interesting pattern.
 - Use sketching or charcoal pencils to draw a picture of your found foliage.
 - Colour your picture with watercolour pencils, or watercolour.
 - Mount your picture on a piece of card, and display it with the found foliage arranged below or in front of it for reference.

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- 4) Where do you think the girl in the story travels to when she leaves the family tree and her home? Why do you think this? What clues can you see in the illustrations that tell us where she has gone?
- 5) How does reading this story make you feel?
 - What different emotions did you feel at different parts of the story, and why do you think you felt them/what in the book triggered them?
 - What do you feel is the most important message in the story?
 - If you had to sum up the book in a single sentence or phrase, how would you do so?
 - Create an artwork that shares your emotive response to this story, or to part of this story.
 - Caption your artwork with a quote from the book, or with what you feel is the most important message of the story overall.
- 6) In small groups or as a class create a dance to accompany a reading of this story at a school assembly or for another class.
- 7) What Australian Native animals appear in this book?
 - Which parts of Australia do they live in?
 - Do any of the animals appearing in the book live in your local area?
 - Choose one of the Australian native animals or birds that appears in this story and create an artwork featuring them, being sure to include a depiction of their natural habitat as well.
- 8) In the story, the tree says *My own seeds too, caught the wind to fly from my boughs, and dance upon the air. To settle in lands I wouldn't see and couldn't know.*
 - What countries have eucalyptus trees been taken to and planted in?
 - Research this online or on the internet, and write a brief history of eucalyptus plantings in foreign countries.
 - Who took the eucalyptus trees there, and why did they plant them?
 - What were they hoping to achieve?
 - Create a slideshow presentation or a poster sharing your findings, and be sure to include pictures of eucalyptus trees growing overseas.
- 9) How many different types of eucalyptus tree are there in Australia?
 - What differentiates one eucalyptus tree from another?
 - Go on a walk around your local area and see how many distinct types of eucalyptus you can locate and identify.
 - Carefully sketch the trees, or parts of them, being sure to focus on the leaf colour and shape, any blossoms or seeds they might have, and the colour and nature of the trunk and bark.
 - Label your sketches, and write a brief description of each part you sketched and observed.
- 10) What are we usually referring to when we talk about a family tree? On an A4 piece of paper draw the outline of a tree, and then turn it into your family tree by drawing small labeled pictures of yourself and your family members on the branches, trunk, and leaves.
- 11) As a class, contact a local environmental protection group and spend a day helping to plant native trees or plants in your local area, or engaging in some other environmentally helpful activity that the group recommends or asks for your help with.
- 12) Choose one of the people shown in the story, and write a short story from their point of view featuring the family tree.
- 13) The tree in the story started as a seed, and then grew from a tiny sapling to a towering giant, and was climbed and appreciated by the grandchildren of the original generation who planted it.
 - As a class create a native garden in your school grounds for future generations of students to appreciate and enjoy.