



WYLAH

THE KOORIE WARRIOR

GUARDIANS

JORDAN GOULD · RICHARD PRITCHARD

June 2022

ISBN: 9781761180033

Format: Paperback

Recommended for: 8–14 year olds

Themes: Adventure, fantasy, culture, quest, friendship, family, First Nations

Applicable to learning areas: English language, literacy and literature, visual literacy

Summary

Wylah is brave, clever and strong-willed, and all her best friends are giant megafauna animals. But she isn't a warrior. Not yet, anyway.

Then comes the day when her family is stolen by the dragon army, and her life is forever changed. She must find the courage to set out on a journey to save them.

What will it take for Wylah to become a warrior, like her Grandmother before her?

Introducing an unforgettable cast of characters, *Guardians: Wylah, The Koorie Warrior 1* is a heart-stopping and imaginative adventure, inspired by First Nations history and grounded in Culture.

Australian Curriculum and *Guardians: Wylah the Koorie Warrior*

- Australian Curriculum Priority, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Histories and Culture
- Ethical Understanding
- English
- HASS (History)
- Arts (Visual Arts)
- Science

Suggestions for classroom discussion and application

It is recommended that all teachers and librarians read ACARA'S *Guiding principles for promoting and implementing the Australian Curriculum cross curriculum priority: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Culture*.

Considering the Cover

- Examine the book's cover carefully, including its images, colours, font, text and framing. Using these as clues, see if you can answer the following questions:
 - Where might this story be set?
 - How would you describe the girl, Wylah (pronounced Wheel-la)?
 - Why might she be described as a Koorie Warrior?
 - What sort of a story do you expect this will be? Choose one or more words to describe the genre of the story you think you are about to read: adventure, fantasy, comedy, informational, biographical, historical, mystery, science fiction.

The word **Koorie** in the title signals a regional identity. According to the AIATSIS website: *Some Aboriginal people prefer to be referred to by their regional identity, such as Koori, Murri, Nunga or others. These names 'place' them as coming from specific geographical regions, similar to saying you're a 'Queenslander' or 'Tasmanian'. These regional identities do not necessarily adhere to Australia's state or territory boundaries.*

Acknowledgment of Country and Welcome to Country

- The authors have included an Acknowledgement of Country before the story begins and a Welcome to Country on the page featuring the 40,000-year-old map of Australia. What is the significance of both statements and how does an Acknowledgement of Country differ from a Welcome to Country?

Watch this [video](#) of Ngunnawal Elder Jude Barlow talking about the importance of Country and the difference between being welcomed to Country and an Acknowledgement of Country

Find out how to create your own Acknowledgement of Country with Common Ground, a First Nations-led not-for-profit organisation [here](#). And learn how to organise a Welcome to Country by inviting a local Elder or Custodian at your school [here](#).

40,000 Years Ago – exploring the map

- Can you see anything unusual about the map of Australia at the opening of the story? [Hint: Papua New Guinea and Tasmania are attached to Australia.] Scientists believe that First Nations peoples came to Australia via a land bridge like the one shown here and that they have been living in Australia for **more than 40,000 years**, making their Culture **the longest continuous living culture on Earth**.

Note: While this story is set 40,000 years ago, First Nations culture continues to be strong and many of the cultural practices depicted in this story continue to be practiced today.

Comprehension Questions

Chapter 1

1. What sort of art will Wylah teach to the children?
2. Why is Wylah nervous about teaching the young children?
3. Kamba and Kapa are two blind baby giant k_____.
4. Woo is Wylah's pet tiger d__ and Kinpa her pet p_____.
5. Who is the Koorie Warrior when the story begins?

Chapter 2

1. A wuurn is a home in Wylah's Peek Whurrong language. True or False?
2. What are the three things Wylah and her friends pack to teach the art class?
3. Why are Wylah and Yahpuurn friends?
4. Where is Wylah's 'quiet sacred place'?
5. Marntaro is a swamp cow. True or False?

Chapter 3

1. Wuurns often have woven baskets or eel traps hanging off them? True or False?
2. The Peek Whurrong word to greet people is n_____.
3. The children refer to Wylah's Grandmother as Aunty because they are all related to her. True or False?
4. How do the children make ochre paste?
5. Why is paint and painting so important to Wylah and her family?



Megafauna

Wylah's animals are larger (or are likely to grow larger) than their modern cousins. Visit the Australian Museum's website to research megafauna to answer the following questions:

- What does the term megafauna mean?
- Name three different types of megafauna that once roamed Australia?
- When did they live in Australia?
- Why did megafauna become extinct?

Totems

- Wylah's quest involves finding and uniting five guardians and their totems. Make a list of each guardian's name, the totem in which it resides and the animal it manifests itself to be when called upon to protect its people. If you had to choose between one to protect your family, which would you choose and why?



Common Ground, a First Nations-led not-for-profit organisation, describes totems in the following way:

'Totems help define First Nations people's relationships with each other and with Country.

They also help define the roles and responsibilities of the clan, family or individual. They are sacred and often take the form of a plant or animal. It is usually forbidden for a person to kill, eat or harm their totem animal.

With a totem comes spiritual responsibility. The koala may be a totem in many First Nations in eastern Australia, including Birpai of Guruk (Port Macquarie) and Awabakal of the Hunter Region. First Nations people are responsible for the protection of their totem.'

[Source: [Common Ground](#)]

Medicine

- Po finds a large medicine pouch in the ruins of the village containing witjuti grub ointment, which he later uses on Pippy's damaged wing. Find out more about this powerful medicine and nine others used by First Nations people in [Australian Geographic](#).

Language

- Create a poster for your classroom featuring all the Peek Whurrong words you found in the story and their meanings in English.

History

*'There are many benefits of what we bring: knowledge, medicine, tools.
All we ask in return is for you to obey our every command.'* (page 58)

- Do you agree that Wylah's friends and family are in need of these things and that their lives would be improved by their contact with Livingstone and Frye? How might this scene be used as an example of what really did happen when First Nations people first met Europeans in 1788?

First Nations Concept of Ownership

'So, who owns this place? Jayden asks.

'Owns? What do you mean?' Merri replies....

'...The land owns us.' (page 120)

- How do Wylah and Merri's ideas about ownership differ from that of most non-Indigenous people in Australia today. Which idea do you think is better for Australia?

The Monomyth:

- Consider these quotes from the text and answer the questions below:

'Wylah, this is your destiny now. Your path is to save our children. Bring back our people, restore the village and feed those smelly animals.' She smiles at me, her eyes gleaming. 'You are our only hope, my brave and beautiful granddaughter. You can do this, you can save our people, Wylah, the Koorie Warrior. Rise up, rise up within.' (page 44)

'I, Wylah, proud daughter of the Marr Nation, vow to find the Guardians, save the animals and rescue my people.' (page 49)

- Do these scenes remind you of anything you've seen on a screen or read in a book before? Have you heard of a theory called the Monomyth (or Hero's Journey)? It says that many stories from around the world fit one simple pattern: a hero is forced out of their normal world to go on a quest, along the way encountering fabulous forces until they win a decisive victory. They then return to their world with new powers or wealth. The films in the Stars Wars series, for instance, fit this pattern.
- Can you come up with other films or books that follow this same pattern?

About the Authors



Jordan Gould is a Peek Whurrong man from Warrnambool, Victoria. He performs Welcome to Country ceremonies at corporate and private gatherings. He is passionate about teaching and talking to groups about culture, language and reconciliation.

Richard Pritchard – a New Zealand-born Samoan man – has had a dream of writing books since he was a teenager. His passion for visual storytelling has led him to work in graphic design, film, animation, commercials and video games

A word from the authors

'I am an Aboriginal man from the Peek Whurrong tribe of Warrnambool, Victoria and my passion is to see my Ancestor's culture and stories told in a way that appeals to and engages non-Indigenous people.

'From a young age, I've struggled with being on the autism spectrum. Although in my mind I can think of complex storylines, I have difficulty writing them down. But I've worked extremely hard and excelled in computer technology with a flair for digital animation.

'I've been mentored by Peek Whurrong Elders Uncle Locky Eccles and Uncle Rob Lowe Snr about language and culture.

'I hope to re-awaken the endangered Peek Whurrong language in this series, so the story contains Peek Whurrong names of people, animals and items.

'I first met Richard Pritchard in 2018 and since then we have developed a writing method that allows me to freely express myself. We call it the 'Bim pa Marrang' method, meaning Head and Hand.

'I am planning to develop the story of Wylah into other industries, such as games, animation, toys and musicals in the future.'

– Jordan Gould

As a New Zealand-born Samoan, I can see similar connections with Pacific Islanders, Maori and Indigenous Australian cultures. In New Zealand, we have very strong female characters in our heritage and history. As a Polynesian, it was easy for me to imagine that there would have been, and still are, strong, independent, passionate, clever and determined Indigenous women. That was the birth of Wylah.

'I met Jordan through teaching animation. He became a natural animator, which is a testimony to his talent and focus. One day he showed me a game he had written and designed. I could see that he had some good storytelling skills and the passion to make them happen.

'Jordan had always wanted to bring his ancestor's stories to the mainstream media and with both of us coming from different but similar cultural backgrounds we decided to team up and bring Wylah to life.

'The initial idea for a female Koorie warrior was mine but it was Jordan who named her Wylah, based on the word 'Wilan', the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo, which is his tribe's totem.

'Jordan looks after all the Indigenous language, names and cultural aspects of the story. I look after the structure, plot outlines and illustrations. Together we develop characters, story arcs, comprehensive backstories and discuss every aspect of the book.

'Before we started writing this story we got permission from Uncle Robbie Lowe Snr, the Peek Whurrong Elder and Wungit (Chief). This was vitally important as it is not enough to just write an Indigenous story, you need to partner with Indigenous people to bring their stories to life.

'It is a cultural exchange and equal partnership.'

– Richard Pritchard

