



Wombat Books
Stories you'll want to share

Teacher's notes



Once

Kate Forsyth / Krista Brennan

ISBN: 9781925563566

Recommended retail: \$24.99 hardback

Reading level: Ages 7–10 picture book

Book summary

Kate Forsyth tells tales of her ancestors' lives in Australia in this beautifully illustrated picture book that celebrates the power of story. From the first perilous journey to a new land, to the great wars and civil rights movements, readers live through key moments in Australia's fascinating history.

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Why study this book?

Stories are essential to our understanding of the world, and are a beautiful legacy from family.

Once vividly portrays the sharing of stories across generations, with a historical backdrop that adds an educational facet. This book encourages students to value their family's history, as well as the stories of their classmates, to increase empathy. With curriculum ties to English and HASS, the engaging illustrations invite discussion about the past.

Themes

Change and the past

As Kate describes the different places her family have been, we witness the change she describes in the illustrations. Outfits and technology progress as you flick through the pages. Earlier stories provide a wonderful snapshot of the past.

Memories and stories

The passing on of stories connects this narrative, as we move through the family tree and learn what they experienced along the way. We see objects that act as memories for the stories told.

Legacies

Knowing the past of your family reveals the important things in their past. Something that may not seem noteworthy to society may be deeply relevant when considering your forebearer's legacy.

Family

By following the mothers of the family, we get a snapshot of their lives and the stories they share.

About the author



Kate Forsyth wrote her first novel aged seven and has now sold more than a million books worldwide. She has a BA in literature, an MA in creative writing and a doctorate in fairy tale studies, and is also an accredited master storyteller with the Australian Guild of Storytellers. She is a direct descendant of Charlotte Waring Atkinson, the author of the first book for children ever published in Australia.

About the illustrator



Krista is a freelance illustrator, fine artist, art teacher and stained glass artist who lives in Sydney, Australia with her partner and mischievous cat. She primarily uses traditional methods for her art, including watercolour, ink and oils. Krista's art has been featured in books, card games, exhibitions and competitions, but she enjoys using her pictures to tell stories most of all.

Author interview

1. **Once takes us from a sailing ship to bushfires to a world at war. Do you feel a connection to these moments of history?**

Yes. My ancestors lived through these dangerous, difficult years. They loved and feared and suffered and prevailed, and because of their courage and determination, I now live in this beautiful, peaceful country. I have tried to honour their memories and their stories in this book.

2. **What story do you remember most that one of your forbearers told you?**

The story of my great-great-grandmother Ellen Mackenzie has always been very important to me. Her and her sister Jane were sent away by themselves, and they had very little money or help. I've often imagined what would be like – how strange Australia must have seemed in comparison to the Scottish Highlands...and yet also how exciting and adventurous!

3. **How can we learn to listen to the stories of our past?**

I think learning to listen is one of the most important life lessons. Everyone has a story to tell. By sharing our stories, we connect with other people. We come to understand their hurts and their hardships, and we feel a kinship with them. Telling our own story is a crucial way to understand our own lives, and to grow towards compassion and empathy.

Questions and reflections

Have the teacher read the book out in class, making sure everyone can see the illustrations. Alternatively, students can take turns at reading each page aloud.

Pre-reading questions

1. How would you define a story?
2. What stories do you know about your family?
3. What information can you learn about this book from the front cover?

After-reading questions

4. Discuss the role of illustrations in picture books. Are there things we only learn from the illustrations, not from the text? Do the illustrations follow the text? Do they enhance the story? How? Do the illustrations make us feel things that the words don't, and vice versa?
5. Were you or your parents/grandparents/great-grandparents born in Australia or somewhere else? If elsewhere:
 - Where were they born?
 - Why did they come to Australia?
 - What were their first impressions of Australia?
6. How is Australia portrayed in this book through the different time periods?
7. How is a sense of time conveyed in the book? Name three ways you see time passing.
8. What can we learn about legacies from *Once*?

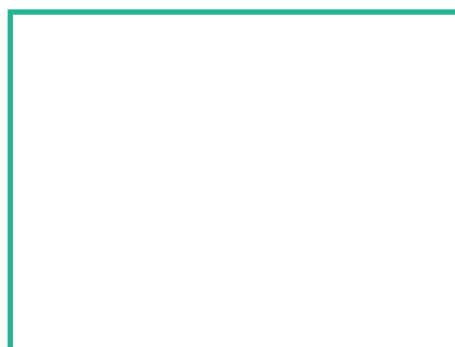
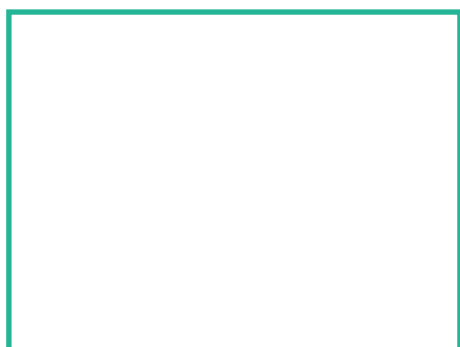
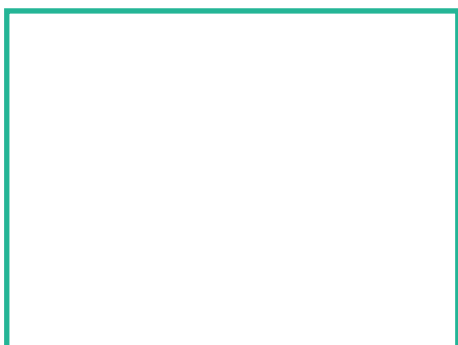
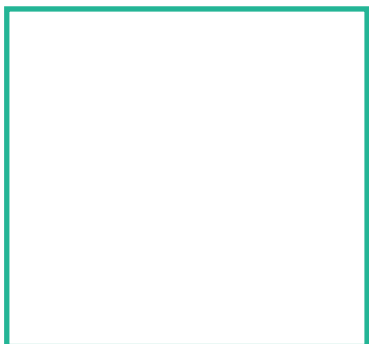
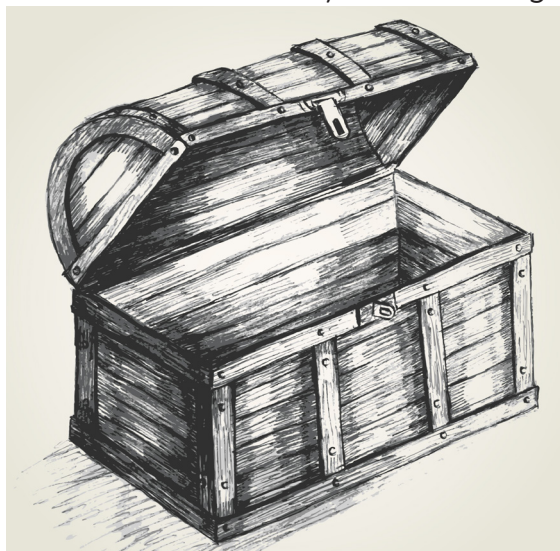
Activities

English/HASS

- Write down a story from your family history.
- Collect stories about your local area from residents, and use them to write a fictional narrative, creating a character who lives in that world.
- Play 'Two truths and a lie', where each student writes down two things about them that are true, and one that is false. Read these out in class and other students have to guess the lie.
- Bring in an object from home and write its autobiography. The object can be something as sentimental as a toy, or something as simple as a sock. Describe when it was first created and what it has done since.
- The great-great grandmother in the story comes to Australia with one small chest. What would you put in your chest if you had to move far away? Draw or write what you would bring in the empty chest below.
- Pick a period in time to research. Have a day in class for students to bring in something to do with their time period. This might be a recipe, a costume, or a figurine.
- The mother in the story marches in the street for peace. What cause are you passionate about? Come up with a slogan that describes your cause.

Worksheet – What would you pack?

If you had to move far away and could only bring one small chest, what would you pack? Draw or write items that you would bring.



Key curriculum areas

Year 2 English

ACELA1462
ACELA1463
ACELA1469
ACELY1668
ACELY1670

Year 2 HASS

ACHASSIO34
ACHASSIO38
ACHASSK044
ACHASSK050

Year 3 English

ACELA1483
ACELT1596
ACELT1599
ACELT1601
ACELY1678

Year 3 HASS

ACHASSIO52
ACHASSIO59
ACHASSK063

Year 4 English

ACELA1491
ACELA1496
ACELT1603

Year 4 HASS

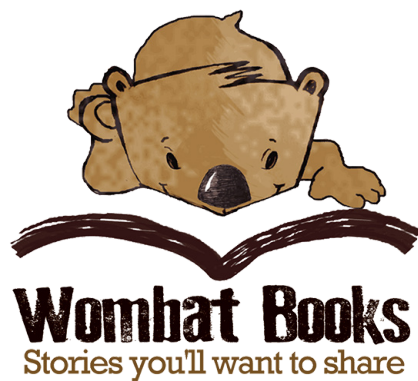
ACHASSIO73
ACHASSIO76
ACHASSIO79
ACHASSIO80
ACHASSK088

Year 5 English

ACELT1608
ACELT1798
ACELY1699

Year 5 HASS

ACHASSIO97
ACHASSK108
ACHASSK109
ACHASSK114



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