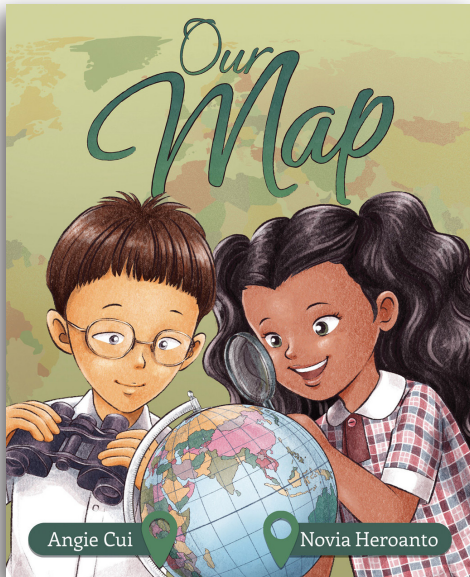


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# Teachers' Notes

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## OUR MAP

Angie Cui / Novia Heroanto

**ISBN:** 9781761112362

**Recommended retail:** \$26.99

**Reading level:** 5 to 8 years

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## BOOK SUMMARY

JJ loves maps. Maps show all the cool places in the world. But Lee, JJ's bestie, can't find his parents' country on any map.

Are some things missing from maps?

With markers, papers, and lots of imagination, their class creates a magical map that's all their own - and so everyone belongs.

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## THEMES

Identity and Belonging • Historical trauma • Displacement • Creativity • Hope

*Our Map* covers topics of immigration and the feelings from leaving a home country due to tensions and war to create a new life and the ripples that has over generations. Some spreads discuss the breakdown of a country, and the country no longer existing, in an age appropriate way.

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Wombat Books, PO Box 302, Chinchilla, Queensland 4413

ABN: 30 137 345 941  
admin@wombathriza.com.au

**Angie Cui is available for author talks and workshops.  
Contact Wombat Books for more information.**

*Our Map Teachers' Notes can be used in schools (independent learning, small groups, and whole classes); at home with caregivers; and as part of mental health support programs facilitated by counsellors, psychologists, children's charities, etc.*



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Angie Cui (aka Yanting Cui) is a Melbourne-based author with a love for children's literature. She currently lives in Melbourne with her husband and two children.

She calls her family the "ABC family" – four people, three cultures –

Australian Bangladeshi and Chinese (her kids are Australian-born, and her husband is originally from Bangladesh). Her articles have been

circulated in publications such as ABC Everyday, SBS, The Guardian, Sydney Morning Herald, Kidspot, Body & Soul, 9Honey and CPA

Magazine INTHEBLACK. Born in Harbin, China, Angie moved to Australia at 18 and graduated from Deakin University with a Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting). She began her career in banking before transitioning to a

role as office manager for the Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) VIC

Branch. Angie is dedicated to promoting reading and learning among children and young adults and aims to ensure that children from diverse backgrounds see themselves in the stories they read.

### AUTHOR NOTES

The story was largely inspired by some casual conversations I had with the children from our kids' primary school, and noticed that the challenges they face in preserving their sense of identity and belonging. Later, I also drew inspiration from Danielle Binks' *The Year the Maps Changed*. Both of these influences motivated me to explore themes of home, displacement, creativity, and cultural narratives.

Writing *Our Map* was quite a journey! I had so many drafts - I wasn't sure if I should mention the name of Lee's parents' home country, so I wrote two versions (more than twenty drafts each version) - one with a country name, another one without. I also did lots of researches and watched some documentaries about the missing countries from the world map, and tried to find the closest war timeline to match Lee's parents' age (because in the book, they came to Australia when they were very young).

The first few pages of the book - it basically gives a brief introduction of my own family. I call my family the "ABC family" – four people, three cultures – Australian, Bangladeshi and Chinese (my kids are Australian-born, and my husband is originally from Bangladesh).

I hope readers - children and adults come away with a sense of empowerment and understanding. The idea of creating your own map to reflect personal experiences, histories and heritage is a reminder that everyone's story matters. Map your way, be creative!

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## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

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Novia Heroanto is a Sydney-based illustrator. Novia was born in Samarinda, Kalimantan Timur, Indonesia. She has a background as a former early childhood teacher and graphic designer, she is now focusing her talents on children's picture book illustrations.

Throughout her life, Novia has embraced a rich tapestry of cultures and experiences, moving across countries and taking on various roles. This journey of integrating into new communities and meeting diverse people has shaped her worldview, while her passion for drawing has remained a steadfast source of inspiration.

Her creative ideas are fueled by the candid interactions and vibrant conversations with the children she's taught, as well as the curiosity of her own toddler. She envisions herself as a bridge between early years education and the creative art sector to nurture empathy and creativity through drawings, and stories.

She predominantly works by penciling her initial ideas on paper and finalizing the complete illustrations on both computer and iPad.

### ILLUSTRATOR NOTES

I was immediately hooked on my first reading of *Our Map* manuscript. It was exciting to illustrate, the feel of open-endedness of the written words gave much freedom for visual storytelling. At the same time, to be honest it was quite daunting as I questioned myself on the best artistic direction to communicate the story, as I feel the manuscript theme suited for slightly older children. After praying about it, and doing more library and local bookseller trips, I decided to draw the characters in a more graphic novel look and intentionally added more detailed elements on each page so that the readers could revisit the page and be delighted to discover something that they might have overlooked previously. I explored different ways to portray maps on the spreads. I also built a subtler earthy colour palette to evoke a nostalgic feeling, and sense of peace which brought balance to the fluctuating emotions of the story. The moss green was the red cord among the pages, as it symbolises strength and resilience, which was central to this story.

Lee's family background increased my appreciation towards my ancestors and their courage. My 爷爷 Yéyé (paternal grandfather) and 奶奶 Nǎinai (paternal grandmother) were boat migrants from Fujian, China and they landed in Kalimantan Timur, Indonesia. Like in the story, I experienced that the act of drawing connected people heart to heart, and my heart rejoiced to see my nephews, Stephan & Owen, draw some artwork to contribute to the story. Being an immigrant, I deeply resonated with the friendship between JJ and Lee in *Our Map*, as I also found kind-hearted and supportive people who helped to nurture my sense of belonging in the particular community where I lived.

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## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

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*Our Map* is a heartwarming picture book that promotes friendship, identity, and belonging. It explores how sharing stories and experiences can deepen our understanding of ourselves and others. The book showcases the power of creativity and imagination, as JJ and Lee collaborate with their classmates to create a unique map that represents their diverse backgrounds. Through this process, young readers learn to appreciate cultural diversity and understand the value of inclusion, empathy, and compassion.

This book is ideal for children aged 5-8 and serves as a wonderful introduction to concepts like cultural heritage and the refugee experience. It encourages children to reflect on their own identities while learning to appreciate the differences in those around them. *Our Map* offers practical lessons in creativity, problem-solving, and resilience, as the children work together to build a new, meaningful map that reflects their collective experiences. Through its tender narrative, *Our Map* also teaches young readers about the transient nature of maps and the histories they represent. It fosters empathy and provides a safe space to discuss difficult topics, like loss and displacement, in a sensitive and age-appropriate way.

## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

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### FOUNDATION

English, Arts, and Humanities and Social Science

AC9EFLE02 - respond to stories and share feelings and thoughts about their events and characters

AC9EFLA07 - explore the contribution of images and words to meaning in stories and informative texts

AC9EFLE03 - recognise different types of literary texts and identify features including events, characters, and beginnings and endings

AC9ADAF01 - create arts works that communicate ideas

AC9ADAFE01 - explore how and why the arts are important for people and communities

AC9HSFS03 - share a perspective on information, such as stories about significant events and special places

### YEAR ONE

English, Arts, Humanities and Social Science

AC9E1LE02 - discuss literary texts and share responses by making connections with students' own experiences

AC9E1LE03 - discuss plot, character and setting, which are features of stories

AC9E1LY05 - use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising and questioning when listening, viewing and reading to build literal and inferred meaning by drawing on vocabulary and growing knowledge of context and text structures

AC9AVA2C01 - use visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials to create artworks

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AC9AVA2E01 - explore where, why and how people across cultures, communities and/or other contexts experience visual arts

AC9AVA2D01 - experiment and play with visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials

AC9HS1S04 - discuss perspectives related to objects, people, places and events

## YEAR TWO

English, Arts, Humanities and Social Science

AC9E2LE03 - discuss the characters and settings of a range of texts and identify how language is used to present these features in different ways

AC9AVA2C01 - use visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials to create artworks

AC9AVA2E01 - explore where, why and how people across cultures, communities and/or other contexts experience visual arts

AC9AVA2D01 - experiment and play with visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials

AC9HS2S04 - discuss perspectives related to objects, people, places and events

## YEAR THREE

English, Arts, Humanities and Social Science

AC9E3LE02 - discuss connections between personal experiences and character experiences in literary texts and share personal preferences

AC9E3LA09 - identify how images extend the meaning of a text

AC9E3LE03 - discuss how an author uses language and illustrations to portray characters and settings in texts, and explore how the settings and events influence the mood of the narrative

AC9E3LY05 - use comprehension strategies when listening and viewing to build literal and inferred meaning, and begin to evaluate texts by drawing on a growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features

AC9AVA4E01 - explore where, why and how visual arts are created and/or presented across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts

AC9AVA4C01 - use visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials to create artworks that communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning

AC9HS3K01 - causes and effects of changes to the local community, and how people who may be from diverse backgrounds have contributed to these changes

AC9HS3K07 - why people participate within communities and how students can actively participate and contribute to communities

AC9HS3K05 - the similarities and differences between places in Australia and neighbouring countries in terms of their natural, managed and constructed features

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## TEACHING POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

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This book may be used in whole class, small group or independent learning activities in schools.

Please note, the following suggestions and activities are suited to a variety of year levels spanning Foundation to Year 6 primary aged children. Some activities may be applicable to early secondary school students, as well.

## KNOWLEDGE AND LITERAL UNDERSTANDING

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### PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Show the cover to the class and ask the students what they think the book might be about.
2. Read the back cover blurb. Does this give them more of an idea of what the book could be about?
3. Ask students if they have any thoughts about the setting of the story, or what the main characters might want.

### AFTER-READING QUESTIONS

1. Ask students if JJ and Lee remind them of anyone they know: a friend, a sibling, themselves perhaps.
2. What is their first impression of JJ?
3. What is their first impression of Lee?
4. How does JJ and how does Lee change over the course of the story?
5. Ask students how they perceive JJ's actions throughout the story. Would they do the same thing? Do they think she helped or hindered?
6. Discuss maps with students.
  - a) Have they seen any maps?
  - b) Can they tell where certain countries are and what they look like?
  - c) Which countries and what else do students know about them?
  - d) What kind of maps have they seen?
  - e) Do students know where their parents or families come from?
  - f) What do the maps of their families look like?

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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### GENERAL

- What is a map, and how do maps usually look?
- What kind of places or things are usually on a map?
- Why do you think Lee was having trouble with maps?
- Why might a country not be in a map?
- Was Lee's parents country once on a map? Why or why not? Why might it not be there now?
- How did JJ help Lee understand more about maps?
- What are some of the places that JJ and Lee included in their new map?
- Why do you think they wanted to create a map that was different from other maps?
- How did the other children in the class help make the new map special?
- What did each child add to the map? How did their drawings show where they come from or what is important to them?
- Why do you think it's important to have a map that shows different people's homes and special places?
- How do maps help us understand each other better?
- What kinds of maps exist?
- What information can maps tell us?
- What does the new map represent for JJ, Lee, and their classmates?
- How do you think they felt when they saw the final map?
- Lee's story is about a place that's not on the traditional map. Why do you think some places are not shown on regular maps?
- Who makes maps?
- What is something that you would put on your own map?
- If you were to create your own map, what special places or memories would you add?
- What do you think the book teaches us about friendship and teamwork?
- How do JJ and Lee show kindness and support to each other in the story?
- How can we show respect and appreciation for other people's cultures and experiences?
- What are some ways we can learn about and celebrate differences in others?

### IDENTITY AND BELONGING

- What does it mean to belong somewhere?
- How does JJ's map help her understand where he and his friend Lee come from?
- Can you find one part of the map that shows something special about JJ's home? What about Lee's

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home?

- How does JJ make Lee feel like he belongs when they create the map together?
- Lee struggles with feeling connected to a place because he can't find his parents' homeland on the map. How do you think that makes him feel and what does he do about it?
- Have you ever felt like you didn't belong or couldn't find where you fit in? How did that feel?
- How do maps show our identities?
- What can a map tell us about where we come from and the places we feel connected to?
- Why is it important for Lee and JJ to create a map that reflects their diverse backgrounds?
- How does the map help them understand who they are and where they come from?
- What parts of your life or culture would you want to include on a map that represents who you are?
- What special places or things would show where you belong?
- At the beginning of the story, Lee feels lost because his parents' country isn't on the map. How does creating the new map help Lee feel more connected to his identity?
- Why do you think it's important for Lee to feel like he belongs, even when he doesn't know everything about his past?
- How do JJ and Lee's friendship help them both feel like they belong, even when they come from different places?
- How do friends help us feel accepted and understood?
- What does the new map represent about the idea of belonging?
- How do the children's drawings come together to create something that shows everyone's identity and experiences?
- What do you think the book tells us about how we can belong in a community, even if we are all different?
- How do you think belonging means something different to different people?
- How does *Our Map* teach us that our identities are shaped by the places and people around us?
- How can we celebrate our differences and still feel connected to others?

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## DISPLACEMENT AND HISTORICAL TRAUMA

- What does 'displacement' mean?
- What impact could displacement have on a person or their family?
- Why is Lee sad when he can't find his parents' country on the map? Why is Lee's homeland not on the map?
- What does a country not being on a map tell us about how some places can be lost or forgotten? What does this say about how maps might not show everything about a place or a person's story?
- Lee's parents had to leave their homeland when they were very young. What do you think it would feel like to leave your home and not be able to return?
- How does this experience make Lee feel? He doesn't have any connection to the place his family is from.
- How do you think the absence of Lee's homeland on a map makes him feel about his identity and his family?
- What is the significance of maps not showing some countries or places? Why do you think some places, especially those affected by war or conflict, might not be represented?
- How can this make people who have been displaced feel like their story is invisible or forgotten?
- How does the story of Lee's parents' country help us understand the experience of refugees or people who have been displaced?
- What do you think it means when someone has to leave their home because of war, conflict, or danger? How does this change their life?
- How might someone who has had to leave their homeland feel when they cannot find it on a map or when they feel disconnected from their past?
- In *Our Map*, Lee and JJ create a new map to reflect their diverse backgrounds. Why is this important for people who have been displaced or who feel like they don't have a place to call home?
- How can creating something new, like the map in the story, help people find a sense of belonging even if they've experienced loss?
- Why do you think Lee's family story is important for the other children in the class to hear and understand?
- How does listening to and understanding someone's story help us be more empathetic to their experiences?
- How does the book show that the loss of a homeland can affect a person's memories and connections to their past?
- What do you think Lee's parents might feel about not being able to visit their old home or see the places from their childhood?
- How does *Our Map* help us understand the importance of creating new connections and stories when old ones have been lost or changed?
- What role does community and friendship play in helping people who have been displaced feel safe and supported?

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- How can we make sure that people's stories, like Lee's family's, are remembered and respected even if their homeland is not on a map?

## CREATIVITY

- Why do you think JJ and Lee decided to create their own map instead of using a regular one?
- How do JJ and her friends make a new map that is special to them? What new things do they add to the map, and why are those things important to them?
- How does their creative decision help them tell a new story about themselves and their communities?
- How did the children in the class use their creativity to contribute to the new map?
- How might JJ have been inspired to this idea by her own family or background?
- What are some of the things the children drew on the map? How did their unique drawings help make the map special?
- What role does creativity play as an answer to the children's feelings and to hopelessness?
- How did JJ and Lee use their imagination to come up with a way to represent all of their backgrounds and experiences?
- If you were creating a map like JJ and Lee, what special places or memories would you include?
- How could your creativity help others understand who you are and where you come from?
- How does the act of creating a map help the children feel more connected to each other and to their identities?
- Why do you think it's important to use creativity to express who we are and where we belong?
- What do you think the new map represents for the children in the story?
- How is the map a symbol of their creativity, teamwork, and unity?
- Why is it important to be creative when facing challenges?
- How did JJ and Lee use their creativity to overcome the feeling of loss and find something meaningful in their story?
- What other creative things do you think JJ and Lee could do to celebrate their backgrounds and friendships?
- Can you think of a project or activity that could bring people together in a creative way?
- How does *Our Map* show that creativity can be a way to celebrate diversity and different cultures?
- In what ways did the new map allow each child to showcase something important about their culture or home?
- How can you use your creativity to make something that tells your own story?
- What kind of creative project would you do to show your identity or what makes you feel connected to others?

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## HOPE

- At the beginning of the story, Lee feels sad and confused because he can't find his parents' homeland on the map. What gives Lee hope after discovering his homeland isn't there?
- How does JJ's idea of creating a new map bring hope to Lee and the other children in the class?
- How does making something new together help them feel better about their experiences?
- What does the new map represent for the children?
- How does it show hope for the future and the possibility of creating something new, even after experiencing loss or confusion?
- How does the story show that even in difficult times, there is hope in working together and supporting each other?
- What did Lee's parents coming to a new country mean for their hope for the future?
- What are some ways hope can help people heal and feel connected to others?
- What role does creativity play in bringing hope to the story?
- How does the children's creative process of making the new map help them transform sadness into something positive and meaningful?
- What do you think the children learned about hope as they shared their different backgrounds and created the map together?
- Why is it important to have hope when things feel uncertain or lost?
- How do you think the new map gives Lee and his classmates hope for the future?
- How does the ending of the story, when the children proudly hold up their new map, show that hope has led them to a positive place?
- What do you think hope looks like in your life?
- How can you find hope in hard times, and what creative things could you do to bring hope to others?

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## ACTIVITIES

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### DESIGN A NEW MAP

Have children work together to create a new, imaginative map of their family, friendship group, class, sports team or a fantasy land. Encourage them to include elements from their own maps and add new features like parks, playgrounds, or magical places. Once the map is complete, have a class discussion about how their new map represents their ideas and imaginations.

1. Children can design their own maps using stickers and markers to represent special places, objects, and features that are meaningful to them. This activity helps them express their personal experiences and preferences, and understand the concept of mapping in a creative way.
2. Asking children to choose a favorite place from any map or draw a new place. Then, have them create a short story about something that happens in that place. They can draw pictures to go along with their stories. Allow them to share their stories with the class.

Alternatively: Create a “Classroom Map” where each child adds something important to them. This could be their favorite activity, a special place, or a favorite thing. Discuss how combining everyone’s ideas creates a unique and meaningful map. This map can be hung in the classroom for all to share.

### CREATE A MAP OF SOMETHING SPECIAL

Ask children to draw a simple map of their own home or family’s special places. They can share their drawings with the class and explain what makes each place special to them.

### INTERVIEWS

Interview your grandparents or someone their age about their life, particularly about their childhood.

- Do they have a fun and engaging story to share?
- Did you learn something new?
- Was their childhood different to yours?
- In what ways was living when they lived or where they lived different to how you are growing up now? Why might things be different? Is it technology, location, or something to do with communities being different? Maybe they were part of a big family or you’re an only child.
- Do you have any questions you want to ask about where they grew up, how their school or community was different, or what their family was like? Maybe they had traditions you didn’t know about or celebrations you’ve not experienced or food you’ve never eaten.

Pick your favourite family story to share with your parents, your class or your friends.

### CREATE A “HOME” POSTER

Ask students to draw a picture of their home or the place where they feel most at ease and safe. They can include family members, pets, favorite objects, or anything that represents their home.

Once they are finished, have each child present their drawing to the class and explain what they included and why it’s important to them.

Discussion:

- What makes a place feel like home?
- Can a person’s “home” be a place, a memory, or a feeling?



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## REFLECT ON HERITAGE

Have students create a map, poster or drawing of their own heritage, drawing symbols or pictures that represent their family traditions, culture, or background. For example, they might draw a special food, a holiday they celebrate, or something from their family's history.

If possible, students can share a story about one of the symbols they included.

This can be done as a class project, with each student adding to a large poster or individually with their own small map.

Discussion:

- What are some things that make you feel proud of your heritage?
- How do our unique backgrounds make our community stronger and more interesting?

## EMPATHY CIRCLE

Sit in a circle and ask the children to think about a time when they felt sad or displaced, just like Lee did in the book. Encourage them to share their feelings or experiences if they feel comfortable doing so.

Ask questions like:

- Have you ever been in a place where you didn't feel like you belonged?
- How did you make yourself feel better or more connected?
- How can we help others feel like they belong when they are feeling lost or alone?
- How can we show kindness to someone who feels lost or alone?
- What can we do to help people feel welcome in our class or community?

Allow everyone to take turns sharing, ensuring everyone is heard.

You can find colouring pages for *Our Map* on our website.

[www.wombathrhiza.com.au](http://www.wombathrhiza.com.au)