



TEACHERS' NOTES

**MULGA'S MAGICAL
MUSICAL CREATURES**

MULGA'S MAGICAL MUSICAL CREATURES BY MULGA

Teachers' Notes by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

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INTRODUCTION

*'This is the story of a dream I dreamt last night.
It was the most magical dream I'd dreamt in my life.'*

Mulga's lively rhyming text depicts a series of musical creatures in landscapes that are richly decorative and ornately detailed. The creatures are playing musical instruments and are dressed in entertaining ways. The artist also employs colours in a vibrant palette.

Where does music come from? Mulga finds it in his dreams. This, his first picture book, will encourage students to dream, to draw, to paint, to rhyme, to play music, to dance, to sing and to laugh!

Mulga's Magical Musical Creatures is a creatively exhilarating romp which is bound to totally involve young readers and to encourage participation among older readers too!

THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

Several themes are covered in this book that might be related to curriculum topics (for primary or secondary school students) in the following areas:

• Study of History, Society and Environment

ANIMALS, BIRDS, REPTILES AND FISH

ACTIVITY: Make a list of all the creatures in this book. Then study any one of them to find out more about their characteristics, habitats and habits.

ACTIVITY: Kangaroos are from Australia. Which other animals are native to Australia? Are any of them included in this book?

ACTIVITY: The lions in this book wear crowns, a reference to the lion being known as the 'king of the jungle'. Why are they called that?

ACTIVITY: Which of the creatures mentioned is a reptile? Research that reptile.

ACTIVITY: Several birds appear in this book. Choose one of them and write an acrostic poem using the letters in the name.

ACTIVITY: Select an animal that doesn't appear in the book. Match the animal with a musical instrument. Then make up a rhyming line about the animal and draw and colour an image of your 'magical musical creature' in Mulga's style.

LANDSCAPE, PLANTS, TREES AND FLORA

ACTIVITY: A variety of landscapes are depicted in this visual text. Have students identify the types of landscapes (eg desert) and features of landscape depicted (eg mountains).

ACTIVITY: Many plants, trees and flowers appear in these images. Have students identify them (eg cactus).

ACTIVITY: Choose a feature of the landscape and have students draw it.

[See also **Music** below.]

• English Language and Literacy

This text might be studied in relation to the following aspects of the writing:

RHYMING

ACTIVITY: 'There were fishes in ponchos plucking guitars, prancing around under the stars.' Invite students to create a rhyming sentence like this.

ABSURD JUXTAPOSITIONS

DISCUSSION POINT: Lions with crowns were lounging on rocks, singing in mics and wearing pink socks.' (p 13) Invite students to create a sentence in which an animal, bird, reptile or fish is doing outlandish things.

ACTION WORDS

ACTIVITY: Find examples of words in this text which denote actions eg lounging, floating, whistling, prancing. Encourage students to write a sentence using these or other action words.

COMPREHENSION

ACTIVITY: Test your students' comprehension by asking them questions about the written text. [See also **Blackline Masters 2, 3, 4.**]

• Visual Literacy

The visual text of a picture book relates to the written text to tell the story using the various parts of the book's design and illustrations, as explored below:

ACTIVITY: The cover of a book is an important part of its message. This depicts the crocodile and the elephant 'jamming' together. What does this cover suggest? The back cover is a gorgeous design featuring leaves framing the back cover blurb. Trace the image; have students colour it in and write their own blurbs for the book inside it. Make a display of all the images and texts.

ACTIVITY: The front and back endpapers contain a beautiful decorative pattern of leaves. Invite students to design another pattern for the endpapers.

DISCUSSION POINT: The **half-title page** contains the title, and the **title page** contains a detail of flamingos and lions taken from the internal images. What does the design suggest regarding the contents of the book?

DISCUSSION POINT: The format is landscape. What part does format play in the design of this text? How might this have differed had it been in portrait or square format?

ACTIVITY: The medium or style employed is Posca paint pen (acrylic art pen). Create an image using this medium.

DISCUSSION POINT: The medium used gives the work a vibrant depth of colour. Name the colours used in this text.

ACTIVITY: The design of pages includes heavily detailed geometric designs of repeated patterns. Choose a pattern and have students create their own interpretation of the pattern and then to colour it in using Posca paint pens or texta pens.

ACTIVITY: This book is something of a 'gamebook' in which the images repay close interrogation. Students might be encouraged to use critical literacy skills to unearth meaning in this text. eg Examine the opening and second pages. How many musical instruments can you see in these pages? There are several images of animals and birds (which appear later in the book) in the decor of the two rooms, and outside, looking into the home. See which ones your students can locate. [See also **Blackline Masters 2, 3, 4, 5.**]

ACTIVITY: Create a graphic novel/comic version of a scene in this book. Read other such books as a guide to style and approach. [See also **Blackline Master 6.**]

• Music

ACTIVITY: Discuss the various musical instruments that appear in this book. Listen to recordings of their sounds. Brainstorm other instruments and make a list. Research one of these instruments. [See **Bibliography.**]

ACTIVITY: Classify the instruments in this book according to categories in orchestras such as Wind, Percussion, String, Brass, Keyboards and Harp.

DISCUSSION POINT: Why do you think Mulga chose the instrument he did for each of these creatures? Why might a elephant play a trumpet or a koala play a didgeridoo, for instance?

ACTIVITY: Encourage students to make instruments out of 'found objects' and then to play in an orchestra together!

ACTIVITY: Read other picture books about music and enjoy them with students. [See **Bibliography.**]

• Creative Arts

There are many creative activities suggested by this text. Students might:

1. Create a **classroom mural** which tells the story in a series of frames designed and executed by students. This might be painted outdoors on a wall or on footpaths with chalk.
2. **Write, direct and act** a play scene based on any incident in this book.

3. **Design a Book Trailer based on this book.** Visit sites such as: 'Book Trailers' Insideadog <<http://www.insideadog.com.au/teachers/book-trailers>> for advice.
4. **Listen to and watch some music written by a number of musicians to enhance this text** <<https://soundcloud.com/user-154019098>> Then invite students to write their own songs to accompany Mulga's text.
5. **Watch Mulga painting** on his YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/MulgateArtist/feed?activity_view=3> Or on his Facebook page: <<https://www.facebook.com/MulgateArtist/photos/a.285684064838698.66433.215722005168238/1189594404447655/?type=1&theater>>
6. **Organise a classroom display** featuring some of the writing and illustration students have done for this unit with books or texts they have researched as a group.

• Learning Technologies

ACTIVITY: Study any of the topics suggested by this book and notes online.
[See **Bibliography.**]

• Mathematics

ACTIVITY: There are many things to count in this book. Set the students a challenge to choose a page and count repeated images on it.

FURTHER TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

- **Research the work of MULGA.**
- **Create a model** of any of the creatures in this book using papier mâché or Fimo clay.
- **Create a diorama** of any scene in this book using a cardboard box.
- **Make a musical instrument** out of found objects.
- **Create animal, bird and reptile masks and costumes** and have a wild romp in the classroom!

CONCLUSION

Mulga's vibrant work offers a cacophony of sounds, sights and feelings. It is entertaining, stimulating and creatively challenging. Students and teachers alike will relish working with this text which offers a wide range of enriching extension activities to explore.

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR'S NOTES

ILLUSTRATION TECHNIQUE

If you were to describe Mulga's art you could say that it pulsates with an untrammelled use of colour and is made up of textured shapes and intricate line work that transcendently floats with emotion.

See Interview: Clark, Simon 'Sydney artist Mulga talks about his new children's book Mulga's Magical Musical Creatures' The AU Review September 27, 2016

<http://arts.theaureview.com/interviews/sydney-artist-mulga-talks-about-his-new-childrens-book-mulgas-magical-musical-creatures/>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

MULGA is Joel Moore, a Sydney-based artist, freelance illustrator and poet who paints murals, designs t-shirts and runs the Mulga brand. He left his finance job in March 2014 to focus exclusively on the making of the art.

Known for his unique style of intricate line work and bright colours, Mulga's art brings to life a world where tropical bearded men run rampant, lions smoke tobacco pipes, tigers wear diamond sunglasses and gorillas rule the world like some kind of funky planet of the apes. Having his first art show and launching his art career in early 2012, his creative portfolio to date is an impressive one with over 56 shows under his belt, winner of AS Colours Little Help Project t-shirt design competition, gold at the 2013 Illustrators Australia awards, finalist and people's choice winner at Hazelhurst's 2013 Art on Paper prize and his recent work with MTV, Adidas, Microsoft, Sol Beer, Mambo, Oporto, MonsterThreads, Munster Kids, Huawei Mobile, Channel 7 *Sunrise*, *Australia's Got Talent*, Beach Burrito Co, Tommy Franklin, Lost at E-Minor and Phoenix Drinks.

Mulga enjoys writing a weird poem for every one of his creations because who doesn't like a weird poem and he reckons it's a neat way to make people smile.

Biography from his website: <http://mulgatheartist.com.au/>



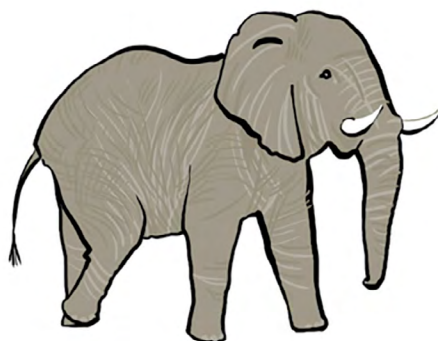
BLACKLINE MASTERS

BM 1 COLLAGE IMAGE

Using Mulga's drawing below, create a collage using Posca pens and other materials such as feathers, sand, leaves, foliage.

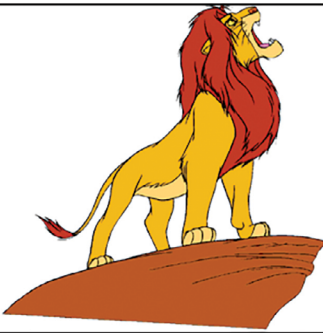
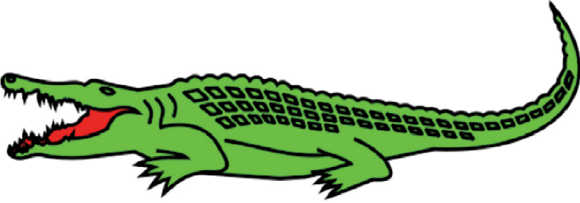
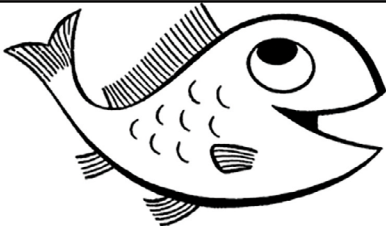



BM 2 NAME THE CREATURE



BM 3 MATCH WORDS AND IMAGES

In this book, each animal or bird plays an instrument. Draw the instrument and name it, and name the creatures in the table below.

IMAGE	INSTRUMENT
	
	
	
	

BM 4 OBSERVATION ACVITIVY

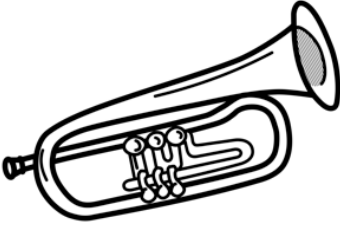





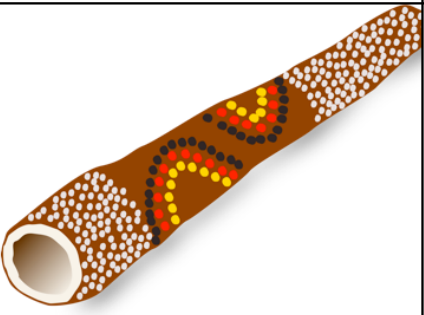

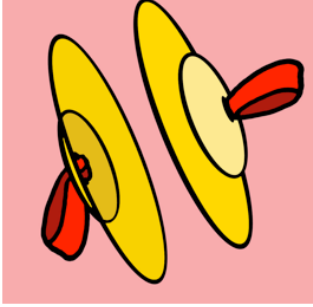
Invite students to name the item of clothing relative to each of the creatures below:

1. Fishes are wearing?
2. Lions are wearing?
3. Crocs are wearing?
4. Elephants are wearing?
5. Lions, flamingoes, gorillas and kangaroos are each wearing?
6. Elephants, flamingos and bison are each wearing?
7. Owls are wearing which two items of clothing?
8. Mulga is wearing pyjamas, decorated with which bird or animal motif?
9. Bison are wearing a national costume consisting of shorts and braces which is called what, and from what country does it originate?
10. What else are the lions wearing?



ANSWERS: 1. Ponchos. 2. Pink socks. 3. Gloves. 4. Suits. 5. Sunglasses. 6. Hats. 7. Bow-tie and gym shoes. 8. Flamingos. 9. Lederhosen is a national costume of Austria 10. Crowns.

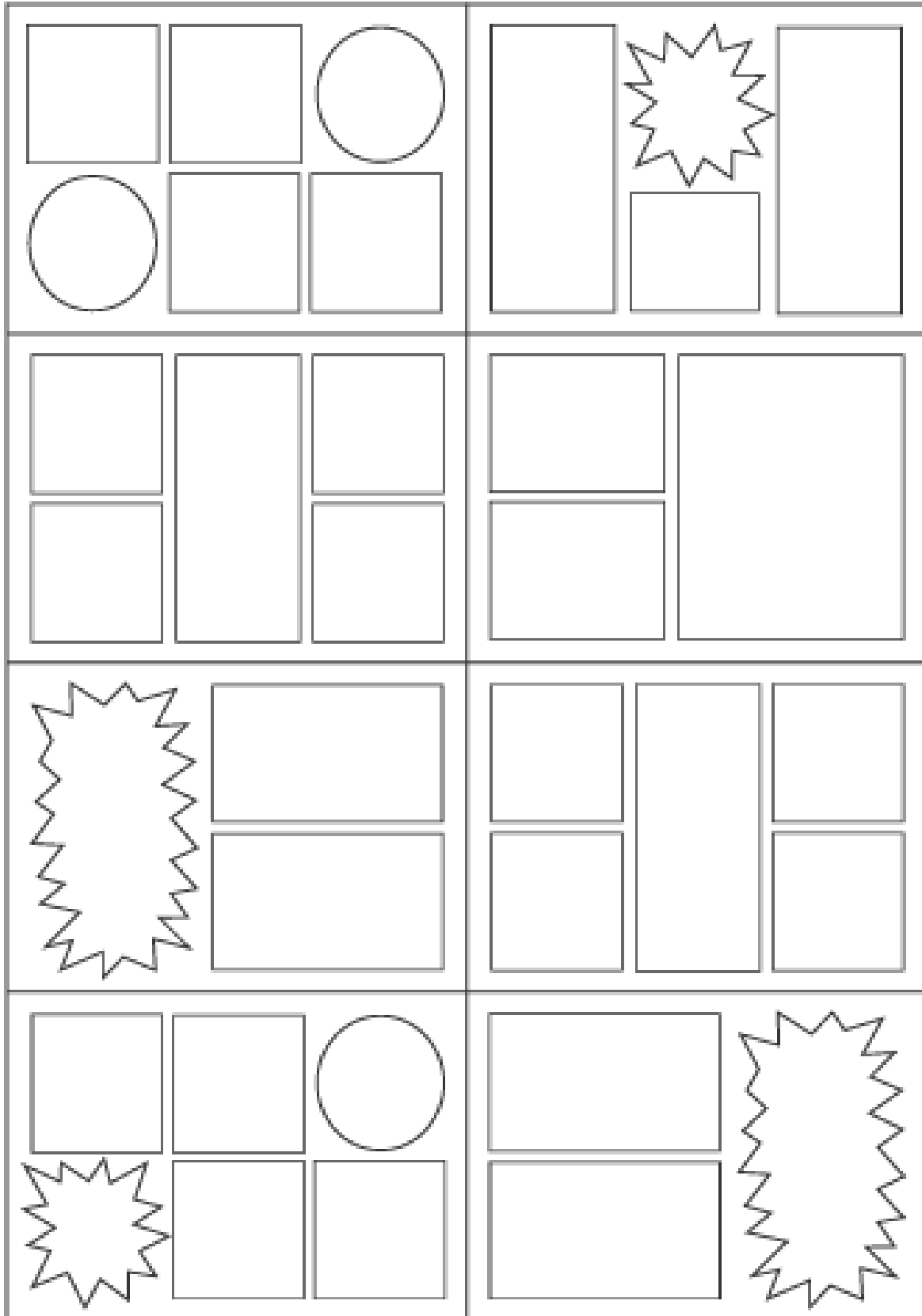
BM 5 NAME THAT MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

		
1.	2.	3.
		
4.	5.	6.
		
7.	8.	9.

ANSWERS: 1. Trumpet. 2. Flute. 3. Saxophone. 4. Guitar.
5. Banjo. 6. Microphone. 7. Didgeridoo. 8. Drums. 9. Cymbals.

BM 6 GRAPHIC STORYTELLING

Create a graphic novel/comic interpretation of one of the scenes in this book. Use any of the layouts below as the storyboard for your comic. Enlarge on a photocopier to give you more space.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

DR ROBYN SHEAHAN-BRIGHT operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011 she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland in 2012 the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Australia and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award.

