



Inquire to Learn!

There are many ways in which *How Water Came to Be/ Awesome Australia* can be used as a base for Inquiry Learning. This is just one suggestion.

Session 1

Using the Big Book, share-read *How Water Came to Be*, stopping at natural points for discussion. Draw on the students' prior knowledge of Australian animals, being thirsty, Aboriginal culture and art, communities, sharing resources, and stories about how things came to be.

Possible Starter Questions for Discussion

Australian Animals: *How many different Australian animals can you think of?* As a class, brainstorm Australian animals. Then tell the students that the following Australian animals feature in *How Water Came to Be*: short-nosed bandicoot (Gudjilla), blue-tongued lizard (Bangarra), willie wagtail (Jiggirrjiggirr), rat (Gula), ring-tailed possum (Midin), kangaroo, kingfisher, magpie, cockatoo, rosella, lorikeet, rabbit, snake.

Being Thirsty: *Have you ever felt REALLY thirsty? What would it be like to not be able to find water to drink?*

Aboriginal Culture and Art: *How is water important to Aboriginal culture and art?* Discuss with the students that water is a critical resource in large parts of Australia. The knowledge of land and where to find water on that land is central to Aboriginal culture. In the desert, water is found mostly below ground. The heat of the desert quickly dries up any surface water, but underground water is protected from the sun in waterholes and rockholes. Aboriginal peoples have

different names for permanent water supplies, or Living Water, and water that is available only seasonally and dries up for part of the year. Knowing which water supplies were seasonal and which were permanent was critical for the survival of Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal peoples used art to pass on knowledge, including the location of waterholes. Waterholes are represented by circles and running water, such as streams or rivers, are represented by wavy lines. Keep an eye out for these markings in *How Water Came to Be*.

Communities: *How do groups or communities make decisions?* Discuss that groups or communities often hold meetings to discuss issues. They decide on a course of action and they decide on whose responsibility it will be to take those actions. The group may ask for volunteers, or they may choose or nominate a person. They may take a vote to make sure that the majority of people in the group agree with the decisions made.

Sharing Resources: *Is it important to share resources within a group? Should everyone get the same amount of resources or do some people need more or less? Why?*

Text and Illustration Based Inquiry Questions

Cover: Look at the cover and ask, *What is this animal doing?* (bathing in water) *What do you think this story will be about?* (the origin of water)

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PP. 2–3: Revisit the text and illustration and ask, *When is this story set? (long ago) What is the only way for the animals to get water? (By licking the dew off the kangaroo grass and chewing the grass.)* As a class, see how many Australian animals you can name in the illustration.

PP. 4–5: Revisit the text and illustration and ask, *Would you be angry if you were Gudjilla? Why/why not? Why do you think Bangarra won't share the water? (Because he is selfish and he might be worried that if everyone has access to the water it will run out.) Do you think Bangarra is behaving fairly? Why/why not?* Point out the circles around the rock and remind the students that these markings indicate that there is a waterhole in this location.

PP. 6–7: Review the text and illustration and ask, *How do you think the animals are feeling about Bangarra knowing where to find water? (Excited about the possible end to their thirst/angry that Bangarra is keeping the water a secret.) Gudjilla offers to follow Bangarra. What do we call someone who offers to do something? (a volunteer)*

PP. 8–9: Review the text and point out the word *galloped*. Brainstorm synonyms such as raced, ran, rushed, dashed, sprinted, bolted, hurried, sped, hurtled, scampered, scurried. Point out the wavy lines in the illustration, indicating a possible underwater stream, and the circles around the rock, indicating a waterhole/spring.

PP. 10–11: Review the text and point out the word *defeated* in the first sentence. Ask, *What does it mean to be defeated?* If necessary, define defeated as having been beaten in a contest, battle, or game. Point out to the students that the willie wagtail is the small black and white bird in the foreground of the illustration. Willie wagtails are similar to NZ fantails, or pīwakawaka, but they are black and white, noisier, and larger. The willie wagtail gets its name from its constant sideways wagging of its tail. They are common Australian birds and they often feature in Aboriginal folk tales. Some Aboriginal peoples historically did not like willie wagtails, as they were thought to hang around camps listening

to conversations, which they would then repeat elsewhere. They were sometimes seen as bringers of bad luck and an expedition might be abandoned if a willie wagtail was seen at camp on the morning of a planned departure.

PP. 12–13: Review the text and illustration, noting the circles and wavy lines that indicate underground water. Ask, *Why is it difficult for Jiggirrjiggirr to hide? (Because of her long tail that flicks from side to side.) Do you think Bangarra is enjoying being followed? Why/why not?*

PP. 14–15: Review the text and illustration and ask, *Should everyone at a public meeting have the opportunity to speak? Should all volunteers be accepted? Why/why not? What if the group considers the volunteer to be unsuitable for the task?*

PP. 16–17: Review the text and illustration and discuss that although Gula's offer to follow Bangarra has not been accepted by the group, he is going to do it independently anyway. Ask, *Is this a good idea? Why/why not? How would you feel if you volunteered to do a job for your class and everyone laughed at you? Why do the other animals not trust Gula? (They think he is too small for the job.)* Ask the students to predict what they think will happen.

PP. 18–19: Revisit the text and illustration and ask, *What advantage does Gula have? (He is very small, so it is easy for him to hide.)*

PP. 20–21: Review the text and illustration and note the water gushing out from under the rock. Note also the Aboriginal symbol for a waterhole. Ask, *How do the text and illustration work together to tell us that Gula is surprised and happy? (The text tells us that Gula had never seen so much water. He jumped up and down with excitement. We can see in the illustration that Gula looks surprised and he is jumping/dancing in an excited way.)*

PP. 22–23: Revisit the first sentence and note that Gula does not stop to drink or swim in the water. Instead his focus is on sharing the water with the other



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animals. Contrast this with the selfish behaviour of Bangarra, who tried to keep the water all for himself. Review the rest of the text and the illustration and note that the illustrator has chosen to change the Aboriginal markings from brown to blue to indicate that the water is now on the surface instead of underground. Ask, *How would the animals be feeling?* (excited, happy, relieved, triumphant, proud of Gula) *Why is the kingfisher making streams and rivers?* (To spread the water across the land.)

P. 24: Review the text and ask, *What is a hero?* If necessary, explain that a hero is a person, or in this case an animal, who is admired for his/her outstanding achievements or courage. Ask, *How is How Water Came to Be typical of stories that explain how something came to be the way that it is?* (It is set *Long ago* and it seeks to explain how Australia got surface water, such as streams and rivers.) *How is it different?* (There is no magic involved. Instead, the animals solve the problem.)

Further Discussion and Inquiry Extension

Invite the students to pick an Australian animal from *How Water Came to Be* and do a research project on their animal. Questions to consider are: Where does it live? What does it eat? Does it have any special adaptations for living in Australia's harsh climate? What interesting facts can they learn about their animal?

Share-read other folk tales from Australia, such as *Koala and the Bunyip*, *How the Birds Got Their Colours*, *The Galah and Oolah the Lizard*, *How the Water Got to the Plains*. Ask, *What similarity do they share with How Water Came to Be?* (They are all folk tales that explain how something

came to be the way it is today.)

Use the Internet to explore the work of Australian illustrator Myke Mollard, and invite the students to draw and/or paint a detailed portrait of an animal of their choosing. Scan or photograph the visual art and email to info@cleanslatepress.com with the artist's name, age, and school. The best artworks will be posted on the Clean Slate Press Facebook page and the artist will receive a prize.

Research to learn more about Aboriginal symbols and their use.

Learn about Aboriginal dot painting and challenge the students to create their own Aboriginal-art inspired dot painting. Scan or photograph the visual art and email to info@cleanslatepress.com with the artist's name, age, and school. The best artworks will be posted on the Clean Slate Press Facebook page and the artist will receive a prize.

As a class, create and illustrate a storyboard of the sequence of events in *How Water Came to Be* e.g.

1. The animals had no water.
2. Gudjilla sees that Bangarra has water.
3. The animals have a meeting.
4. Gudjilla follows Bangarra but loses him.
5. Jiggirrjiggirr volunteers to follow Bangarra.
6. Bangarra sees Jiggirrjiggirr following him.
7. Gula volunteers and is laughed at.
8. Gula follows Bangarra to the water.
9. Kingfisher makes streams and rivers.
10. Everyone has water.

Divide the class into pairs or groups of three.

Have each group illustrate one event. Connect the illustrations with arrows.

Session 2

Using the Big Book, share-read *Awesome Australia*, stopping at natural points for discussion. Draw on the students' prior knowledge of Australia, Australian cities, Australian animals, Aboriginal Australians, droughts and water conservation, and poetry.

Possible Starter Questions for Discussion and Inquiry

Aboriginal Languages: *There are hundreds of different Aboriginal languages and dialects spoken in Australia.*



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It is very rude to use the wrong language when addressing an Aboriginal Australian. If you're wanting to know how to greet an Aboriginal Australian in their indigenous language, it is best to ask them in English how to do this. The answer will vary depending on where they are from.

Cover and Contents Page: Look at the cover of *Awesome Australia* and discuss that the mother kangaroo is drinking from a waterhole or stream. Point out the joey in her pouch. Ask, *Do you think that water is important to the survival of the kangaroo?* Tell the students they will learn more about how kangaroos are suited to life in Australia inside the book.

Location of Australia/Geography: Reread the first sentence on P. 1 of *Awesome Australia* and ask, *What is a continent?* If necessary, define a continent as one of the seven great landmasses on Earth. The continents are Africa, Antarctica, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, and South America. Reread the rest of the text and point out the location of Australia's largest cities on the map. Ask, *Which Australian city is shown in the photo?* (Sydney) Share with the students that Australia is about 29 times bigger than New Zealand and its population is six times the size of the New Zealand population. Ask, *What country is Australia's closest neighbour?* (Papua New Guinea) Locate Australia on a world map and note its neighbouring countries, including Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, New Zealand, New Caledonia, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. If any of the students come from Australia or have visited it, invite them to share their experiences.

Australian Cities: Ask, *What are Australia's four largest cities?* If necessary, direct the students back to the answer on P. 1 of *Awesome Australia* – Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, and Perth – and then ask, *Which city is largest of all?* Reread the caption on P. 2 about Sydney and then reread the caption on P. 3 about Perth. Share with the students that Perth's closest city is Adelaide. Ask, *Does anyone know what the capital of Australia is?* (Canberra) Discuss with the students that a country's capital is not always its biggest city. Tell the students that the

city of Canberra, which is located halfway between Sydney and Melbourne, was created especially to be the official capital of Australia.

Australian Animals: *What is an animal adaptation?* (A special skill which helps an animal to survive. An adaptation can be a physical change to an animal's body, such as a duck's webbed feet for swimming, or a behavioural change, such as how meerkats take turns to watch for danger.) *How have some animals adapted to life in Australia?* Reread PP. 6–7 of *Awesome Australia* and review the students' understanding of the text. Discuss how the animals have adapted to need very little water to survive.

Aboriginal Australians: Reread the caption on Aboriginal Australians on P. 3 of *Awesome Australia* and ask, *Does anyone know how long Aboriginal peoples have been living in Australia?* (Around 50,000 years.) Share with the students that Aboriginal Australians survived by hunting animals with spears, spear throwers, and boomerangs and gathering plants, grubs, and insects. They had few possessions and they made everything they needed, such as canoes made from bark. Today, there are about 650,000 Aboriginal peoples in Australia. Most live in cities, but a few thousand still follow a fairly traditional way of life on the land.

Droughts and Water Conservation: *What is a drought?* If necessary, tell the students that a drought is a long period of lower rainfall than normal, leading to a shortage of water. In recent history, Australia has experienced the worst droughts in 1,000 years. The droughts, combined with a rapidly growing population, most of which is in the cities, has led to shortages in fresh water. Reread PP. 4–5 of *Amazing Australia* and ask, *Is it a good idea for everyone to conserve water, even when there is not a drought? Why/why not?*

Poetry: Reread P. 8 of *Awesome Australia* aloud and tell the students that these two stanzas are part of a long poem. Point out the focus on geographical features and the rhyming pairs: plains/rains, sea/me,



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land/understand, die/fly. Also point out the rhyming structure ABCBDEFE and how it adds rhythm to the poem. Share with the students that “My Country” is an example of a patriotic poem, which means that the writer has used poetry to express feelings of patriotism, or devoted love, national loyalty, and support of her country. Ask, *What country is “My Country” referring to?* (Australia)

Further Discussion and Inquiry Extension

Research to learn more about Australia. Using PP. 4–5 of *Awesome Australia* as a model, create a photo essay on Australia.

Invite the students to pick an Australian city and learn more about it. What state is the city in? How many people live there? What climate does it have? What special features/culture set it apart from other Australian cities? Have the students write a report about their city and locate it on a map of Australia.

Learn about the water cycle. There are many great videos on the water cycle on YouTube.

As a class, research to learn about how Australia is turning seawater into fresh water for its cities through the process of desalination.

Following on from PP. 6–7 of *Awesome Australia*, invite the students to learn about other Australian animals that have adapted to life in the Australian desert, such as the bilby, perentie (monitor lizard), the thorny devil, and bearded dragon.

Using P. 8 of *Awesome Australia* as a springboard, challenge the students to write their own patriotic poem about the country they currently live in or a country they have lived in. What do they like best about their country? Is the landscape important to them or do they want to focus on the people, animals, culture, or sport of their home country? Will the poem be rhyming or non-rhyming? How will they make the poem convey a sense of their country? How will they use words to show their feelings?

Research to learn more about Uluru. What is Uluru? Where is it? How big is it? Who are the traditional owners of Uluru? Why is Uluru a sacred/special place?