



Magabala
Books 

Teacher Notes

The Toast Tree

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Illustrated by Fern Martins

Teacher Notes prepared by Christina Wheeler
in context with the Australian Curriculum.

OVERVIEW

Every afternoon, Ella and Mia's grandfather brings them a special treat from a magical tree. When the girls try to locate the tree for themselves, Grandpa explains that its magic will stop if they find it.

The Toast Tree is a delightful story about the special bond between grandparents and their grandchildren and the magic that only childhood can bring.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

THEMES

Relationships

- Ella and Mia share a lovely relationship with their grandparents, enjoying stories, afternoon teas, fishing and many other experiences together
- Ella and Mia are close sisters

Grandparents

- Grandparents have a unique bond with their grandchildren

Magic

- Grandpa makes the girls believe in the magic tree through his stories and by bringing them special treats

WRITING STYLE

The Toast Tree is written in third person, past tense. The narrative is easily accessible to early childhood and younger readers. The illustrations add another layer of meaning to the text.

CULTURAL NOTES

An effective way to include Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander information is to regionalise it within your curriculum. Educating your students about their own local history, bringing to life the Indigenous past of your region and using local Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander languages (wherever possible) within the school and classroom context is a wonderful way to start.

The Toast Tree explores many themes that may be relevant to discussions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. *The Toast Tree* emphasises the importance of storytelling and respect for nature, and depicts the importance of families and elders as custodians of story.

CLASSROOM IDEAS

- After reading *The Toast Tree*, discuss the relationship that Mia and Ella have with their grandparents.
- The story tells us a lot about Grandpa, but less about their grandmother. By using the illustrations as a guide, discuss the important role she plays in the girls' lives.
- The coastal town is described as a, 'small dusty town surrounded by the sea.' After reading the information about the author at the back of the book, locate Broome on a map of Australia. View photos of Broome on the internet. Compare these photos with the illustrations in *The Toast Tree*. Discuss the illustrator's use of colour to contrast the water with the dust. Create your own coastal paintings to display around the classroom.
- Write a poem about the beach or a special place that you have visited with your grandparents. Brainstorm its unique features to help with your imagery.
- Describe the relationship you have with your grandparents. How is it different from your relationship with your parents?
- Compare *The Toast Tree* with other picture books about children and their grandparents such as *The Potato People* by Pamela Allen, *Dan's Grandpa* by Sally Morgan or *My Pop is a Pirate* by Damon Young.
- Rewrite the story of *The Toast Tree* in the role of Grandpa.
- Why is Grandpa sad when the girls eat the honey from the tree they've found? What does this tell us about the respect that Aboriginal people have for nature?
- Examine the page opening in which the girls' grandparents are fishing. Find out more about the spear that Grandpa is using and the reel that Grandma is using. Why aren't they using fishing rods?
- What sort of relationship do Ella and Mia share? How do you know this? How do the illustrations tell us more about their relationship than the written text alone?
- How important is it that children have magical stories in their lives? Discuss some magic that you believed in when you were younger.
- Why is Grandpa the only one who can pick the toast from the tree?
- Find out more about the flowers and trees that native birds use for nectar. In a diagram, explain the interdependence between plants and birds for survival.
- Research how bees make honey. Create a flow chart or graphic organiser that explains this process. You could also use an app such as *Explain Everything* on your iPad.

- Consider hosting a Grandparents' Day, inviting grandparents to share in some activities and storytelling with the students.
- Create a recipe for 'Honey Toast', listing the ingredients, utensils and method used.
- Do you have special stories or games that you share with your grandparents? Write a reflection that shares these stories.
- Create a toast tree for your classroom. Have students write their own messages about their grandparents on individual pieces of toast,