



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

This article was originally published in printed form. The journal began in 1973 and was titled *The Aboriginal Child at School*. In 1996 the journal was transformed to an internationally peer-reviewed publication and renamed *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

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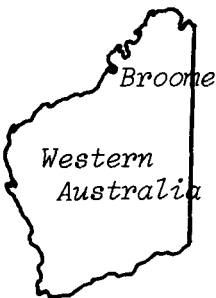


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3. The very good teacher, who has no interest or background experience, but will successfully teach a course if it can be provided.
4. The disinterested teachers who will perpetuate many of the old paternalistic ideas and attitudes if they attempt the topic at all. In fact, it would probably be better if they did not attempt to involve their classes.
5. The teacher who is racially prejudiced and who would require an intensive in-service program.

There are difficulties in deciding how and what should be involved in Aboriginal Studies, but this must not stop the development of relevant courses, because well-meaning teachers will continue to teach the topic in their classrooms, regardless. Therefore the most important facet we must consider in introducing these courses is the in-service training that must accompany them. Written courses and materials without in-service programs cannot produce attitudinal change in either teachers or children, so a great effort will be required to involve the teachers.

The courses that are developed must ensure that Aboriginal people are recognised as having an important place in Australia's heritage and in today's multi-cultural society.



GETTING STARTED ON MYTH...

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Myths express what is significant during man's experience, and so communicate at a deeper level than other stories. They should never be treated as pre-scientific attempts to explain how things began. The creation of myths met a much more profound and basic need.

In presenting myths to children, there are many methods that can be used. Rather than just presenting one or two myths and leaving it at that, significance is gained by presenting children with a collection of myths on one topic, for example, creation or

fire, from a variety of places around the world. Children will find the values of literary objectives that the myths have in common. With guidance from the teacher, they will see that the myths are true to man's experience.

Programs should allow for as much involvement of the pupils as possible during their study of myths. Integration with as many subject disciplines as possible, particularly the expressive arts, should come naturally. This gives the pupils a chance to convey thoughts of what the myth tells them or their group. The working out of a ritual dance, the making of music to accompany it, the writing of poetry, and the numerous art activities can be effective ways of saying what cannot be expressed through ordinary language. It is man's imagination that has to be stirred and not his rationality. The celebration and the performance of these student fashioned rituals are the culmination of this study and can impregnate a very deep unconscious movement in the performers and witnesses.

One American teacher, Herbert Kohl, describes his success in involving children with mythology, in an article entitled *Comics and Myths*.¹ After displaying some comics in his classroom, he noticed that all wanted to be the strongest, most intelligent superhero possible. He found students unwilling to accept that their super-heros could be women or black. On suggesting that students write their own comic books, they began to list the powers of their super-heros. The list included: power to see through things; to know what someone else thinks; to speak to animals; to knock down buildings; to change into animals; to do magic; to make people have nightmares.

The students proceeded to draw their comics and role-play their heroes in their plots. Kohl then introduced stories from traditional mythology dealing with gods and hero archetypes and, after activity and discussion, the students rewrote their stories.

This interplay of the students' ideas with the material outside their immediate experience led to stories that could not have developed through the children's imagination alone or through teaching mythology independently and ignoring the students' inspiration. (Kohl)²

Despite the fact that the teacher has a very meaningful topic, getting started is the most difficult step in the study of myth-making. Since it has been argued that myth should be personal to every child, a chance should be given for a child to explore private myths through individual experience and group dynamics. The teacher's

input is necessary to define and build the 'universe' the children are working in, to introduce to them myths from the various cultures. The children will soon define their own explanations for the teacher originated 'universes'. As they are exposed to puppetry, story telling and art, they understand that their own explanations of life are very close to those of universal mythology.

A creative approach to mythology and astronomy has been proved by the writer to be very successful on a recent camp. It allowed the children to continue their life as questioners. Despite the tremendous scientific advances, man is still seeking answers to questions about himself and the universe. Some of the questions requiring abstract answers were: do people live on other planets; when will the next ice-age be; who was the first human on earth; is there a second life after the first; does the world come to an end; why could not the world be a rectangle; why can't we live forever?

These questions are convincing in showing that despite their lack of knowledge on the process of myth, children can see a relevance,

...because they are closer than we to the sense of wonder that inspires myths. And, in a way, myths might be more meaningful to them than our rational explanations. (Murray)³

Myths from the past have answered most of these questions. Further study time could allow for the students to research for myths on these themes, and if some of these can't be found, encouragement given for students to make up their own myths. The child is always asking questions, not only because he wants to find answers, but just because the process reassures him of his security.

Myth could assure him of his existence and his place in the mystic cosmic order. The hearer need not understand the stories, but if he merely allows them to enter his imagination, he will have some impression of the strategy that operates the world, mankind and himself. The questions which young people are having to sort out for themselves can sometimes be more easily recognized if they are distanced. They may be best distanced by seeing them in another culture's myth. Eleven-year-olds move very naturally from discussing details of the story to talking about their own situation.

Children can work creatively with myths in writing, telling and illustrating their own myths. The concretization is essential to the non-cognitive thinker, and so, murals, models, and audio tapes have an important part to play. The theme of time, or a time machine, gives opportunities for discussion on creation and the world.

Every day we find examples of mythology used in advertising and the words of our language. For instance: the days of the week; the elements in physical science; the names of our planets; trade names, for example, Ajax, Mercury, Gemini.

Mythological symbols appear in such diverse fields as space probes, emblems, poetry and science. Children can research the origin of these names and their appropriateness for the particular day or element. No encouragement will be necessary for them to enter into the world of literary metaphors.

In recalling or telling a myth, the characters work their way out of predicaments or into worse ones, while we also perceive sometimes, that a psychic drama is happening within us. The values underlying a story should be discussed. For example, the Greeks believed that Nature was sacred because it was inhabited and protected by divine spirits. Such a belief led to a conviction that all things in nature should be treated with respect. Students can be questioned about this value system. Murray,⁴ in the *Instructor*, states :

Once students have been introduced to the basic mythological adventures they will develop a fascination for the questions that gave rise to myths and the value systems which are implicit in the myths of various societies.

We are not past myth making. Our children should come to understand and participate in it to the full.

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References

1. Kohl, H: *Teacher* No. 74, pp. 8-12
2. Kohl, H: *ibid.* p.12
3. Murray, E.: *Instructor* May '72, p. 37
4. Murray, E.: *ibid.* p.37

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