

Colours of Australia Teacher Notes

Written and Illustrated by Bronwyn Bancroft

Published by Little Hare, September 2016

SYNOPSIS

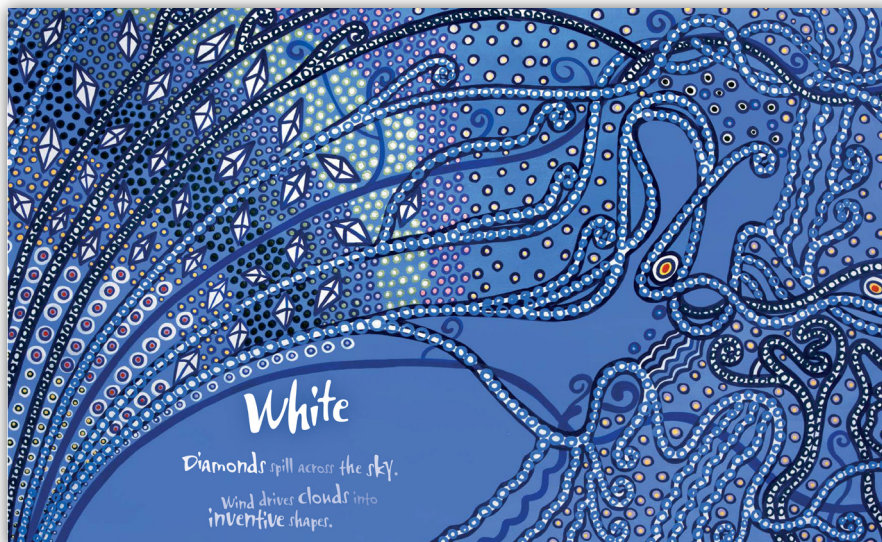
Raindrops fall on a freshwater stream ...

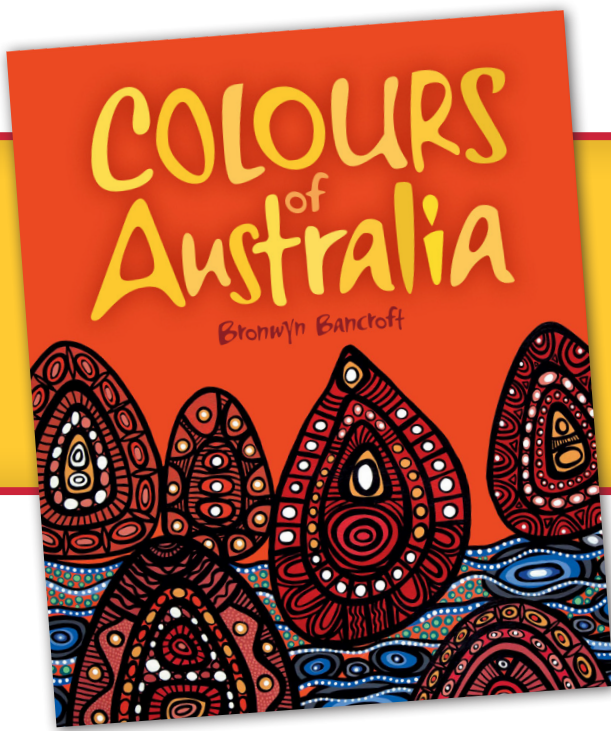
A deep love of country inspires Bronwyn Bancroft's poetry and the richly layered hues of *Colours of Australia*.

Each line speaks a different voice, each image stirs a different mood, and all combine to evoke the miracle of colour with which we are surrounded.

THEMES

Colours of Australia is a poem in colour and words. Like all Bronwyn Bancroft's books it is testament to her deep love of country and, as the title suggests, focuses specifically on the spectrum of colours that surrounds us. From mountaintops and the star-spangled sky, to the green folds of hills and depths of dark water, *Colours of Australia* opens our eyes to the variety of colour in the details of the natural world, and awakens our sensibilities to the powerful emotional impact that close observation of nature can offer us, once we take the time to look.





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WRITING STYLE

Bronwyn Bancroft is a poet as well as an illustrator, painter and designer. When writing nature poetry, Bronwyn naturally expresses herself in blank verse. The style of her nature writing is minimalist, and some readers compare it with the Japanese koan or haiku and ask if this is her inspiration. However, Bronwyn's vibrant imagery and action-rich style is her natural form of expression when she writes about country.

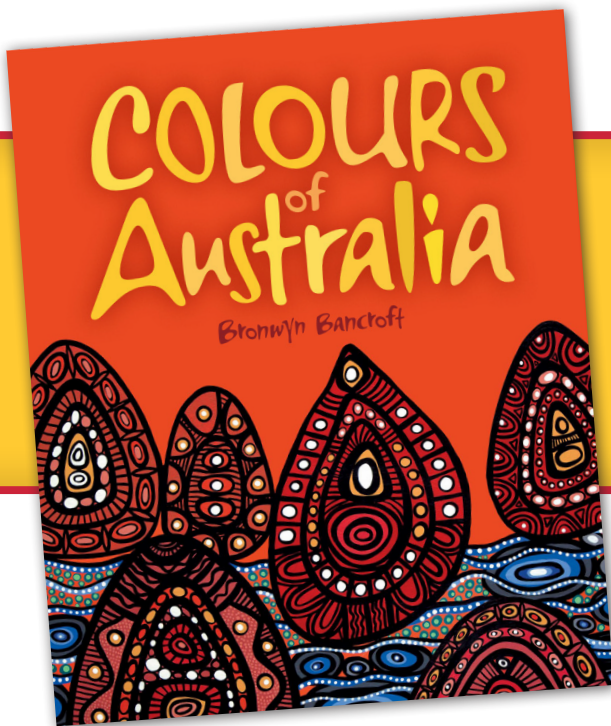
ILLUSTRATION STYLE

The illustrations are arranged to follow the colour spectrum from red to violet, with the addition of white and black. As well as showing us the spectrum of colours around us, Bronwyn has arranged the colours to represent phase of the daily cycle, from silvery pre-dawn to the black of night.

Readers will also notice there are two paintings dedicated to the colour blue. They represent sky and water, above and below, but blue is also a predominant colour in all of Bronwyn's art. The second blue painting also represents Bronwyn's love for a particular creek, beside which she has spent some of her happiest hours.

In a book that celebrates the colour spectrum it makes sense that each page is bursting with colour. Each page is devoted to a specific hue, but is also balanced by contrasting and harmonious colours.





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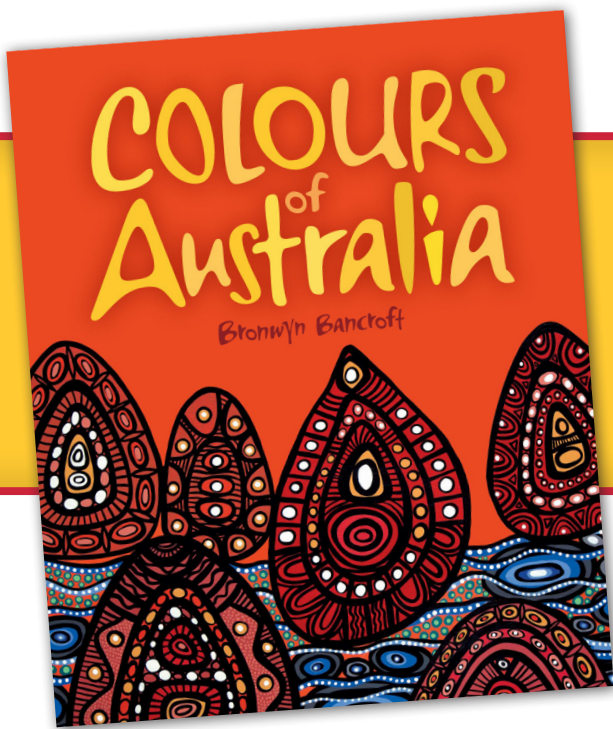
AUTHOR BACKGROUND

Born in Tenterfield, northern New South Wales, Bronwyn Bancroft is a descendant of the Djanbun clan of the Bundjalung nation. Bronwyn is a leading Indigenous artist, illustrator and art administrator whose work is held at the National Gallery of Australia, the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Australian Museum. Bronwyn has illustrated several award-winning books for children and she has a long history of involvement in community activism.

STUDY NOTES

1. Bronwyn highlights central features of her images by counterpointing them with non-related ideas, both textual and visual. Select a painting or line of text where she has done this and consider how the juxtaposition of ideas contributes to the overall image, and to the book as a whole. For example, on the 'indigo' page, Bronwyn speaks of mountains as beds for the clouds.
2. Bronwyn uses a range of verbs to describe the effects of colour in a landscape. How effective is her matching of verbs and colours? What different ways could colours and actions be combined for dramatic effect? Do certain colours suggest certain types of actions? If so, why do you think this is?
3. How effectively has Bronwyn superimposed the colour spectrum onto the passage of time? How has she achieved this superimposition without the theme of 'time' overwhelming the colour theme?
4. Bronwyn has provided two images for the colour blue. As well as representing personal memories, the colour blue also suggests two important landscape features: sky and water. Consider potential second images for some of the other colours, and suggest their significance.





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ACTIVITIES

- Talk to your class about Indigenous art. Conduct a class project, researching the history of the art form different well-known Indigenous artists and have them choose their favourite. Ask them to present it to the class explaining the artwork and why they chose it to present over any others they found.
- Get your students to illustrate a page of their own artwork using a scene from the Australian outback. Encourage them to use colour to represent the features of the land and sky. Once this is done, ask them to create a poem to go with their artwork.
- As a class discuss the use of shapes and patterns to create symbols in Indigenous artwork. Discuss the way these symbols create a story and how powerful they can be in story-telling.

