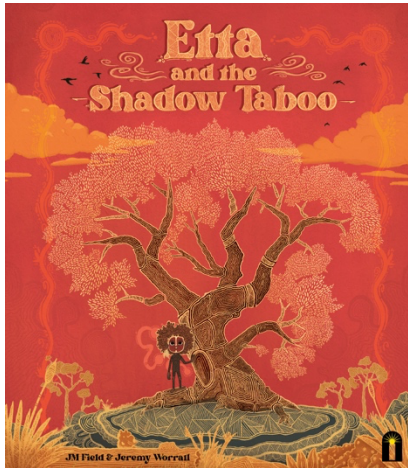


## Teacher's Notes



### ***Etta and the Shadow Taboo***

Written by J.M. Field

Illustrated by Jeremy Worrall

#### **Teacher's Notes by Robyn Sheahan-Bright**

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#### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

##### **RECOMMENDED FOR**

Pre-readers and beginning readers (ages 3 +, Pre-school +)

##### **KEY CURRICULUM AREAS**

- Learning areas: English, Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS); The Arts
- General capabilities: Literacy, Intercultural Understanding, Critical and Creative Thinking

#### **THEMES**

- First Nations Cultural Beliefs
- Body Awareness and Social Distancing

#### **SYNOPSIS**

*Where is theirs?  
And where is mine?  
To hurt a shadow  
Is surely a crime*

When Etta steps on Baawaa's (her sister's) shadow, she learns of the Shadow Taboo, and learns to value the personal space of others, as well as her own.

Written by Gamilaraay author J.M. Field and illustrated by Ngarabal/Gomeri artist Jeremy Worrall, *Etta and the Shadow Taboo* will invite readers to follow a Gamilaraay tradition where one must avoid stepping on the shadows of others.

It invites readers to not just be aware of their bodies, but to be aware of their bodies in context. It teaches children to always ask: Where is my shadow? Where is their shadow? Where are they in relation to me? Am I too close?

This lesson, though a very old one, is no less relevant today. Amidst a global pandemic, it seems perhaps more important than ever.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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**J.M. Field** grew up on waterfall country, in a small town along the Great Dividing Range on Dharug land. He is, however, a Gamilaraay Guwaymadhaan mari from Moree way, where the red sand meets the black soil. He did his undergraduate studies at the University of Sydney in mathematics and French literature, followed by a doctorate in Mathematical Biology at Balliol College at the University of Oxford. He is still a research mathematician, but fills his spare time writing.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

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**Jeremy Worrall** is a Ngarabal/Gomeroi multimedia artist. As a young First Nations man, Jeremy specialises in First Nations multimedia, working on a range of government and private projects for community. He is also working on a personal project that explores the visual representation of the Dreamtime and provides a platform for First Nations people to share their stories.

## THEMES

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- **First Nations Cultural Beliefs**

This story explores a cultural belief of the Gamilaraay, one of many First Nations peoples. The Shadow Taboo is just one of many beliefs that Gamilaraay people observe. First Nations peoples' beliefs and protocols determine many of their personal interactions with others. Some of these beliefs are referred to as 'Avoidance Practices'. Discuss with students some of the fundamental beliefs and protocols of First Nations peoples, based on careful research. [See **Bibliography**.]

J.M. Field, the author, is a Gamilaraay Guwaymadhaan mari from Moree way. Jeremy Worrall, the illustrator, is a Ngarabal/Gomeroi artist. Research their groups, and the various other First Nations peoples and their location on a Map of Indigenous Australia.

Share First Nations culture with students. Acknowledge key events in the First Nations calendar and invite First Nations writers, artists and musicians to meet students and share their stories. [See **Bibliography**.] NAIDOC Week will be held 2–9 July 2023 and the theme is 'For Our Elders'. Indigenous Literacy Day, organised by the Indigenous Literacy Foundation, will be held on 8 September 2023. National Reconciliation Week will be held 27 May to 3 June 2023, and National Sorry Day will be held on 26 May 2023, both organised by Reconciliation Australia.

- **Body Awareness and Social Distancing**

*Etta and the Shadow Taboo* invites young people to be aware of personal space and to respect their own and other people's personal space. Discuss the need to respect each other and to be aware of boundaries which people may prefer to establish, depending on their cultural beliefs, or other beliefs or customs. Discuss the concept of personal space and social distancing.



## WRITING STYLE

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**Rhyme** is used throughout this text, for example:

'Baawaa screamed  
Real loud you see  
She said all mean  
Get gone from me!'

Choose a paragraph in this text and write a list of other words which might rhyme. (eg See/Me + Fee, Tea, Sea, Bee, We.)

**Aboriginal Language:** J.M. Field has 'included three very important Gamilaraay words: yaama, Gunii (the 'Gun' of Gunii is pronounced somewhere between 'goon' and 'gun') and Baawaa. They mean, in turn: hello, Mum or Aunty (but only on your mum's side), and older sister – First Nations' kinship terms are much more nuanced than English.' Discuss Aboriginal languages with students. The Indigenous Literacy Foundation has many programs that address the need to preserve Aboriginal languages and has published picture books in those languages. Read some of these texts.

## COMPREHENSION

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Identify the animals and birds which appear in this visual text.

Identify the plants which appear in this visual text.

## WRITING EXERCISE

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This might be described as a cautionary tale. Etta learns a valuable lesson when she makes the mistake of stepping on Baawaa's shadow and is told by the Spirit Tree what she has done wrong. Read other First Nations cautionary tales such as those by Gregg Dreise, Ambelin and Ezekiel Kwaymullina, Sally Morgan or Helen Milroy, listed in the **Bibliography**.

Write a cautionary tale based on a lesson you have learned about morals or good behaviour.

In your own words describe the 'Shadow Taboo' and why it is important to First Nations peoples.

## ILLUSTRATION STYLE

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Study the patterns woven into Jeremy Worrall's artwork, which is intricate and varied. Observe, for example, the patterns on the trunk of the spirit tree (pp 4–5) or the patterns which decorate Baawaa's clothing (p 6) or the patterns revealed in the aerial view of the land (pp 24–5). What did you notice about the patterns employed?

Read other First Nations picture books and examine the style of patterns the illustrators employ in their art. Bronwyn Bancroft's *Patterns of Australia* (2018) would be a useful text to examine.

Discuss perspective and how an image might be viewed from a variety of perspectives. For example, the aerial view on pp 24–25 is taken from Etta's view flying above the landscape; on pp28–29, Etta is viewed in a close-up as if she's looking at a camera.



## CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

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- Discuss shadows with students. Make simple *Hand Shadows* using a light screen.
- Make *Shadow Art Drawings* with students. [See **Bibliography** for ideas.]
- Make *Shadow Puppets* using a stick or skewer, glue, and some heavy craft papers. [See **Bibliography** for ideas.]

## RELATED READING

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- Morgan, Sally *Little Bird's Day* Ill. by Johnny Warrkatja Malibirr. Magabala Books, 2019.
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- Murphy, Aunty Joy *Welcome to Country* Ill. by Lisa Kennedy. Walker Books, 2016.
- Murphy, Aunty Joy and Kelly, Andrew *Wilam: A Birrarung Story* Ill. by Lisa Kennedy. Walker Books, 2019.
- Pryor, Boori Monty *Story Doctors* Ill. by Rita Sinclair. Allen & Unwin, 2021.
- Roach, Archie *Took the Children Away* With illustrations by Ruby Hunter. Simon & Schuster, 2020.



Seymour, Jasmine *Open Your Heart to Country* Magabala Books, 2022.

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