



Reflect and Respond

Looking After Country with Fire: Aboriginal Burning Knowledge with Uncle Kuu

Author: Victor Steffensen

Illustrator: Sandra Steffensen

Storyteller: Tamala Shelton

Publisher: Hardie Grant Explore



Themes: First Peoples and First Nations, Environment, Australia, Bushfires

Year levels: Middle Primary & Upper Primary

Learning Area: Science, Humanities

Discussion questions:

- Looking first at the front cover and title, what do you think it means to 'Look after country with fire?' What do you know about Aboriginal fire practices?
- Why do you think First Nations people have used fire over thousands of years in this way? How are these practices important for the land and wildlife?
- "*Mother nature is always talking to us*". What do you think is meant by this? Why do you think it is important to listen to and watch for signs and changes in nature?
- Name some of the different wildlife you saw in the illustrations. Why do you think they have been included? Explain some of the ways that animals, birds and insects respond to the burning practices?
- What is the difference between the 'cool fires' and 'bad wildfires'?
- When is grass ready to burn?
- Who should light these 'cool fires'?
- What are some of the ways in which the knowledge of cultural burning is "kept alive" in Aboriginal culture?

Story response ideas:

a. Cool burning vs hot wildfires

Discuss the benefits of Aboriginal fire practices for the environment and wildlife. Think about the important reasons for managing Country with fire.

Using the **T-Chart** template, list the:

- benefits for ecosystems and species
- risks and impact of not managing Country with fire.





Story response ideas continued...

b. Interview Uncle Kuu

If you could interview Uncle Kuu or an Elder who has experience and knowledge of Aboriginal fire practices, what would you like to ask them? Think about the 'wonderings' you still have after reading the book? What would you like to find more about?

Use the **Interview template** to write down your questions.

c. Exploring cultural practices through story

Looking After Country with Fire takes us out on Country and explains the cultural practice of burning to help protect and nurture certain landscapes.

Explore one of the following First Nations stories to find out about other important cultural practices. Select one of the stories and compare it with *Looking After Country with Fire*. Use a **Venn diagram** to help identify the differences and similarities between the two books. Consider:

- authors purpose (key messages in the book)
- language (point of view, type of language devices used, tone and terminology etc)
- illustrations (colour, style etc)
- characters
- setting
- story plot or structure
- type of cultural practice described - its importance and relevance

Welcome to Country by Aunty Joy Murphy (welcoming ceremonies)

Baby Business by Jasmine Seymour (smoking ceremony)

Come Together: Things Every Aussie Kid Should Know about the First Peoples by Isaiah Firebrace (ceremonies, caring for country, creation stories, dreaming stories, songlines, astronomy, music and dance, art, language).

NB: Further activities and stories that explore the topic of bushfires can be found in the Natural Disasters: Unit of Work for Year 5 students.



Scan the QR code to
view the story!



INTERVIEW PLANNER



NAME

INTERVIEWER'S NAME:

INTERVIEWEE'S NAME:

INTERVIEW DETAILS:

DATE: -----

TIME: -----

PLACE: -----

PURPOSE OF INTERVIEW (what information would you like to gather?):

WHAT TO ORGANISE FOR THE INTERVIEW:

- -----
- -----
- -----
- -----

QUESTION 1:

ANSWER 1:



INTERVIEW PLANNER



NAME

QUESTION 2:

ANSWER 2:

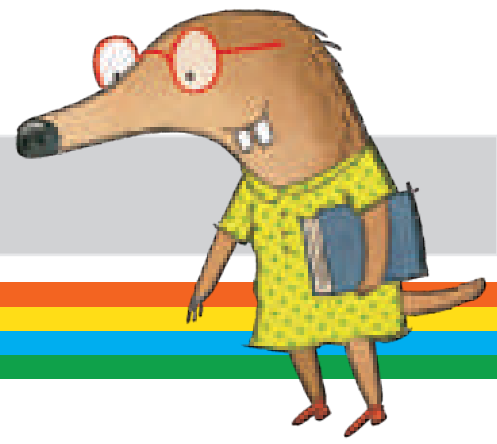
QUESTION 3:

ANSWER 3:



INTERVIEW PLANNER

NAME _____



QUESTION 4:

ANSWER 4:

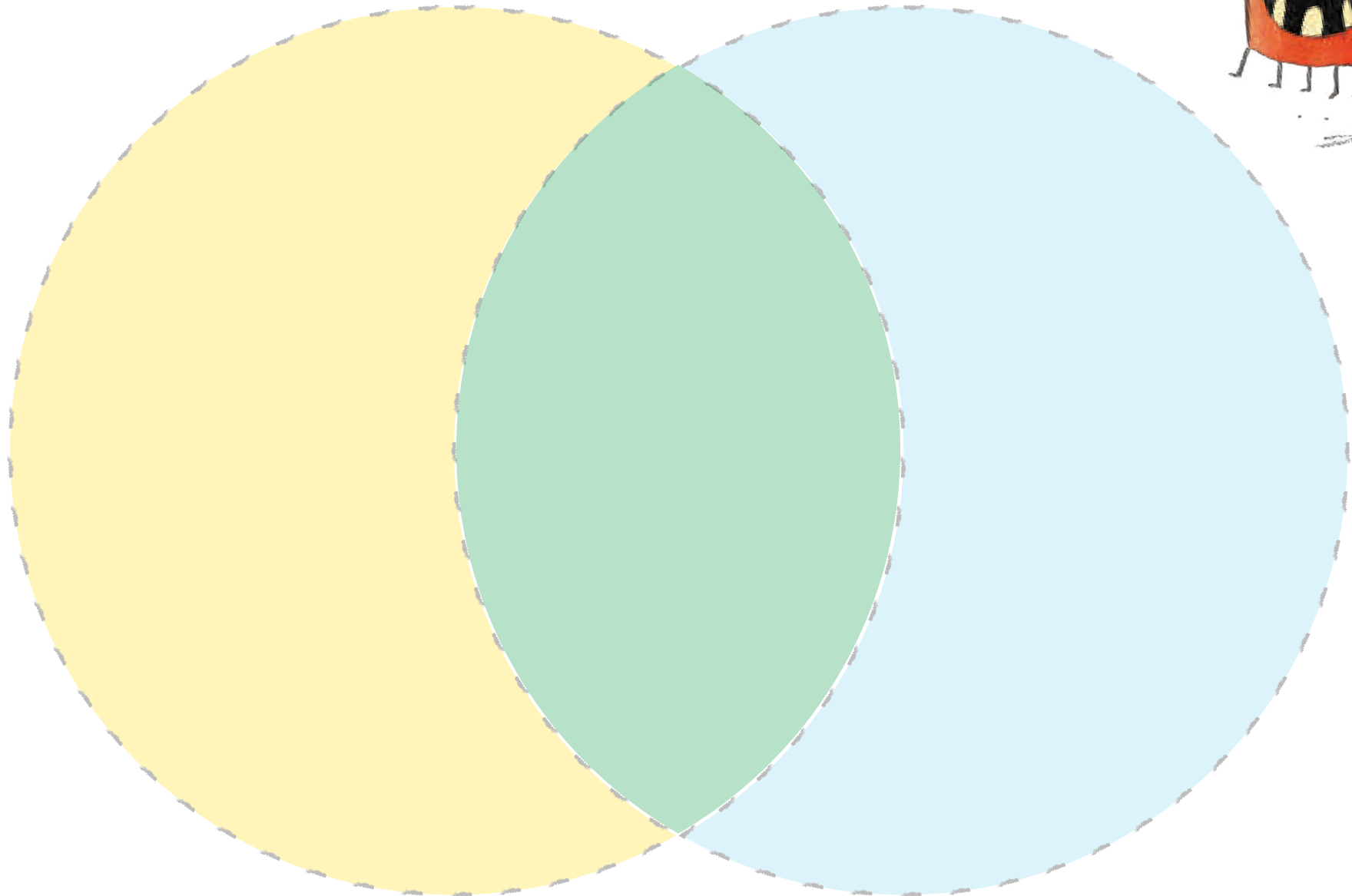
QUESTION 5:

ANSWER 5:



VENN DIAGRAM

NAME _____





Student Task Sheet

Print this page for your students to use during Literacy Rotations

Today, you will be viewing and listening to:

Looking After Country with Fire: Aboriginal Burning Knowledge with Uncle Kuu

Author: Victor Steffensen

Illustrator: Sandra Steffensen

Storyteller: Tamala Shelton

Publisher: Hardie Grant Explore



Year levels: Middle & Upper Primary

Learning tasks:

After viewing the story, choose one of the following 3 activities to complete.

a. Indigenous fire practices - KWL

1. On a **KWL template**, note down in the 'Know' section what you already knew before reading the book, about the practice of cultural burning to help certain environments.
2. Watch this [short BTN clip 'Burn off Season'](#) on ABC Education to find out more how this practice is used to prevent and prepare for bushfires.
3. After watching the clip - and after reading *Looking After Country with Fire*, note down 2-3 facts you have discovered about this topic in the 'Learn' section of the template.
4. If you could ask an Elder like Uncle Kuu some questions, what would you like to find out? Note down 2 questions in the 'Wonder' section.

b. Cultural fire practices poster

Create a poster that outlines the benefits of using fire safely to protect and nurture certain environments. This can be created online using programs such as Canva, or hand drawn.

Consider the key messages to include and the use of visual images or diagrams.





Learning tasks continued...

c. Describe a scene

Sandra Steffensen's stunning illustrations show the changing landscapes and how wildlife interacts with the environment. Select one of the illustrations in the book and write a descriptive paragraph to detail what is happening, and the mood or feelings it communicates.

Consider using language devices such as adjectives, repetition, similes to help make your description as interesting and powerful as possible.



*Scan the QR code to
view the story!*



KWL-CHART

NAME _____



Date _____

Topic _____

**WHAT I
KNOW**

**WHAT I
WONDER**

**WHAT I
LEARNED**

