

Pannikin & Pinta

Colin Thiele

Pannikin and Pinta is a poignant story about a family of pelicans who breed when Lake Eyre is full. The reader follows their fortunes as they attempt to survive - against the odds. It is a wonderfully moving story with an environmental message which will interest both young children and older students. Peter Gouldthorpe's illustrations extend and enhance the text.

Language and Literacy

There are numerous examples of beautiful language from in Colin Thiele's writing which students can explore.

He uses metaphors and similes to make his story graphic: *'as brown as pottery'*; *'like monstrous veins of brown blood'*; *'darker than bruises'*.

Pupils can find some more examples of these and write them down and see how they enhance our picture of the landscape and climactic extremes.

The title is a good example of alliteration. Examine how this is used by Colin Thiele and what effect it has on the story.

Activities

- Do a brief pen sketch of the main characters in Pannikin & Pinta.
- Find two similes and two metaphors. Say what they helped you to imagine.
- Make a list of words that convey feelings.
- What happened that was a miracle?
- What is meant by 'victory in defeat'?
- What is meant by 'painting themselves into a corner'; 'living on borrowed time'; and the 'lure of the sea'?
- What was the something incredible that a farmer and his son had seen that they related to the local shop owner? What part did luck play in the story?
- Which dead lake in Australia has the longest name?

Writing

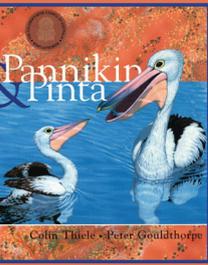
- Write about what happens when the lake is full.
- Describe the pelican family. How did they get their names?
- What was life like for them at Lake Eyre at the beginning of the story? What happened later?
- Describe the journey of the pelican family.

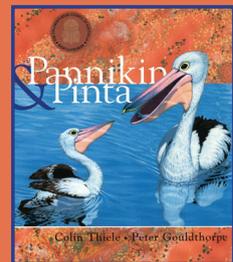
Maths

There are many numerical comparisons made to help the reader imagine the immensity of things: amounts: billions of tonnes of water; a hundred different channels distances: creeks twenty kilometres wide; water stretched a hundred kilometres; shapes: weaving, curving.

Activities

- The class can find further instances and say what these contribute to the story.
- Students can work out the distance the pelican family flew to reach Squeaky Bay.
- How long did it take for Pinta and Pannikin to fly to Squeaky Bay?
- Studies of Society and the Environment.





Geography

A map of the journey of the pelican family is provided in the book. Allow children to study this. On a more detailed map show the class the situation of Lake Eyre and talk about places and their distance from other towns and the coast so students can have a picture of what inland Australia is like.

In the story, many geographical terms are referred to: 'sandbars', 'bays', 'inlets' and 'headlands' for the picture of Lake Eyre filled with water; and 'ridges', 'rocks', 'peaks' and 'gorges' are used for the Flinders Ranges. A study can be made of what each of these geographical features is, as well as the many others mentioned.

Using the story, there is an opportunity to make a study of weather patterns and terms, the climate and seasonal cycles; for example: monsoons and cyclones.

Activities

- Describe the land over which the pelican family flew on their way to the sea.
- Look up the places mentioned in Pannikin and Pinta and find out more about them.
- Find out more about Cooper Creek and the Diamantina River.
- Describe the pelicans' flight over the Flinders Ranges.
- How long did the water take to get to Lake Eyre from where it fell as rain?

History

- After whom is Lake Eyre named? Find out more about this explorer.
- Lake Eyre has been full in the year 2000, but this is an infrequent occurrence.

Research

- Students can find out: how often Lake Eyre fills up; when was the last time it was full; how many times was it full last century.

Environmental Studies

- There are strong conservation messages in Pannikin & Pinta. Look for these and discuss them with the whole class.
- Talk about nature. What happens in the normal course of events?
- What happened to Portly? Why?
- Why did the migration of pelicans take place? Explain why some were luckier than others.
- It was unusual for pelicans to be in Coober Pedy and Kingoonya. How do you know? Why were they there?
- Look at the part played by human beings in the pelican family's story.
- Discuss the part played by nature.
- Look at the stages of their journey. What happened at each stage?
- Talk about the harshness and cruelty of nature.

Activities

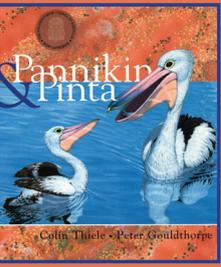
- From the story, ask children to say what pelicans are like. Make a list of what they eat and how much food they consume. How do they get their food?
- Encourage the class to make a study to find out more about pelicans.

Art

- Examine Peter Gouldthorpe's illustrations. How were they done?
- What do they add to the reader's enjoyment of the story?

Activities

- A study can be made of perspective using the illustrations from Pannikin & Pinta.
- Look at how the story is presented both in words and pictures and what each contributes to the reader's overall understanding to the story.



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PANNIKIN & PINTA TEACHERS' GUIDE