

Sela Ahosivi-Atiola Yani Agustina

# I AM LUPE

*A celebration of the differences that make us who we are*



**TEACHERS RESOURCES**

# I AM LUPE

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## Teachers Resources by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

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# INTRODUCTION

*We are all different and no one is the same. There is no one else in the world like you. When a little girl with brown skin and curly hair notices she is different from her classmates, she asks her mother what she is. Her mother's answer is a celebration of all the wonderful differences that make each of us who we are.*

*My name is Lupe and there is no one quite like me.  
My skin is brown. My hair is dark and curly. I look different from the other kids at school. What am I?*

Lupe is a daughter. She is a big sister. She is a friend. She is smart. She is fearless. She is funny. She is beautiful. She is enough.

This is a warm-hearted story that inspires big and little readers to embrace the things that make them who they are.

## THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

Several themes are covered in this book which might be related to the Australian Curriculum, including:

### HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES (HASS)

Several themes and topics are relevant to the following Curriculum Area:  
<<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/humanities-and-social-sciences/hass/>>

### DIFFERENCE AND DIVERSITY

**Key Quote:** 'Lupe, we can't all be the same. Our differences make us who we are. And you are many wonderful things.'

**Discussion Point:** The word diversity is often used to describe cultural or ethnic backgrounds. But this book emphasises the fact that we are each different and unique, because of the qualities we have, the roles we play in our families and communities, and the way we look and dress. Discuss the word diversity and the multitude of meanings it might evoke.

**Discussion Point:** This picture book is one of a growing number of works for children that are acknowledging the rich diversity of our society. How important is it to read about different cultures in your books? There are still few books published on Pacific Island Countries. How important is it for people from the Pacific to be represented in our media and in our literature? Read *I Am Lupe* along with more picture books that depict Tongan culture and various cultures from around the world. [See **Bibliography.**]

## IDENTITY AND SELF-ESTEEM

**Key Quote:** 'You are special. You are beautiful.' Mum can see all the way into my heart. She leans down and whispers in my ear, 'You are enough.'

**Discussion Point:** Lupe is despondent because she looks different from everyone else in her class. She feels isolated. Her classmates ask her questions about her identity that she can't answer. Invite students to discuss self-esteem. Then ask them to describe themselves and to outline what they think distinguishes them from others. Or you could invite them to draw a picture of themselves instead.

## TONGAN HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY AND CULTURE

**Key Quote:** 'It's the first place on earth to see the sunrise each day.'

**Discussion Point:** In one of the first few spreads, Lupe recalls being born in Tonga, where she lived before coming to Australia.

Did you know that the Kingdom of Tonga in the South Pacific consists of more than 170 islands spread over 740,000 sq. km? It also sits north of New Zealand and south of Hawaii, surrounded by other Pacific nation states. (Source: 'Tonga' *Activity.Village.co.uk* <<https://www.activityvillage.co.uk/tonga>>) And Nuku'alofa is the capital of Tonga. Tonga is the only remaining Indigenous monarchy left in the Pacific.

There are four main island groups: Tongatapu, Ha'apai, Vava'u and the Niuas. (Source: 'Tonga' <<https://pacific.un.org/en/about/tonga>>)

Find out more about the history and geography of Tonga.

**Discussion Point:** Research the culture of Tonga and then discuss what you have discovered. Below are some suggestions.

Lupe's favourite dish is her mum's 'ota ika, a Tongan raw fish salad. What other dishes are enjoyed in Tonga and other South Pacific Countries and Islands?

Research Tongan traditional dress such as the kiekie and the ta'ovala.

Tongan crafts include the famous Tapa (Ngatu) cloth made from the bark of trees. Research Tapa making and other Tongan crafts.

'The coconut oil she lathers on me makes my brown skin glisten under the sunlight.' Lupe's mother follows Tongan custom in doing this. What other examples of Tongan customs did you find in this book?

In Tongan, Lupe means dove. What other names are common in Tonga?

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

This is relevant to the following Curriculum Area:

<<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/english/>>

The text of this book might be studied in relation to the following aspects:

**Activity:** When her mother tells Lupe how she is special and different to others she makes a list of the things she loves about her daughter. Make a list describing someone you love.

**Activity:** Write a poem about Lupe in any style.

**Activity:** Test your students' **comprehension** by asking them questions about the written and visual text. [See also **Author's Notes** below.]

## VISUAL LITERACY

This is relevant to the following Curriculum Area:

<<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/the-arts/visual-arts/>>

The visual text of a book includes the various parts of the book's design and complements or extends the written text.

**Activity:** The **cover** of the book depicts Lupe in a dress made of fabric patterned to reflect Tongan culture; she is holding a large shell to her ear. The back cover has her mother holding Lupe in a loose embrace; they are depicted with a wave behind them in which other shells can be seen floating. How do these two images relate to the contents of the story?

**Discussion Point:** The **endpapers** feature Lupe. Both the **half-title** and the **title page** repeat the cover images. How does the design of these and the various pages in this **storyboard** contribute to the reader's engagement?

**Activity:** Invite students to draw an illustration to accompany the poem they wrote above. Create a classroom mural using all the poems and images.

## CREATIVE ARTS

There are many creative activities suggested by this text:

**1. Celebrate Tonga Language Week.** Tongan stories, crafts, food and culture could be shared, and a display of Tongan resources established in your classroom or school.

See: 'Tonga Language Week' *Ministry for Pacific Peoples* <<https://www.mpp.govt.nz/programmes/pacific-language-weeks/tonga-language-week/>> [See **Worksheets.**]

**2. Make a Tongan kiekie or girdle.**

See: 'Tonga Language Week - Uike Kātoanga'i 'o e Lea Faka-Tonga craft: Kiekie' *Christchurch City Council Libraries* September 4, 2020

<<https://my.christchurchcitylibraries.com/blogs/post/tonga-language-week-uike-katoangai-o-e-lea-faka-tonga-craft-kiekie/>>

**3. Learn a Tongan dance or song. See some suggestions below.**

Dance: 'How to Tau'olunga (Tongan Dance)' <<https://www.theconet.tv/how-to/tonga/how-to-tauolunga/>>

Songs: Mālō e lelei, fēfē hake? (Hello, how are you?) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ehl6LncrPw>>, Fo'i to'o (Clam shell). <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpmRQ3Rdx0>>

**4. Create a poster** to advertise this book.

**5. Create a Book Trailer** to promote this book. [See **Bibliography.**]

## LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

**Activity:** Research Tongan history, geography and culture online.

## FURTHER TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

- Both author and illustrator are debut picture book creators. How would you describe their work?
- Investigate any other topic not covered in these notes which you consider is suggested by this text.

## CONCLUSION

Lupe's story is warm and touching. A child's feelings about being unlike anyone else in her class are sensitively explored in a work which celebrates difference.

## AUTHOR'S NOTES

At some point in our lives, we notice the little or big things that make us different or unique. Sometimes it's the way we look or dress and the language we speak. Other times, it's our interests or the foods we eat. Regardless of what it is, these differences are exciting and make learning about one another so much more enjoyable! Lupe is of Tongan heritage, and her mother helps her realise just how special she is. It was important to include Lupe's mother as a central character, because in the Tongan culture, the family, especially the mother, plays an important role in building and nurturing strong women.

To make Lupe's story unique I wanted to pay homage to her birthplace by including details that are specific to the South Pacific. Lupe was born in a 'kingdom nestled in the heart of the South Pacific' refers to the Kingdom of Tonga, the only Indigenous monarch left in the Pacific. It is 'surrounded by a sea of islands' is a metaphor used by Tongan-Fijian writer Epeli Hau'ofa to refer to Oceania or the Pacific region. 'It is the first place to see the sunrise each day' acknowledges that nations such as Tonga, Kiribati and Samoa are the first countries in the world to welcome a new day and new year. Finally, Lupe's favourite food, 'ota ika, is a popular dish enjoyed in many Pasifika cultures.

Picture books are one of the best ways to provide a window into any experience and explore various themes for children. I hope Lupe's story is a resource that encourages conversations on diversity and acceptance of self and others.

## ILLUSTRATOR'S NOTES

Lupe's character reminds me of myself when I was young. I was a timid girl who lacked confidence and felt different from other kids. When working on the *I Am Lupe* illustrations, I read the story and allowed my mind to visualise the scenes as a movie. I then wrote down the ideas I had imagined.

My favorite step in the illustration process is gathering references. Ideas can often come from unexpected places, such as a local coffee shop floor pattern, an old building fence or a Wes Anderson movie. When it comes to colouring, I find myself locked away for hours and days on end as I try to match colours and explore the best harmonies. I hope the illustrations in *I Am Lupe* make lots of kids smile and show there is nothing wrong with being yourself.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Sela Ahosivi-Atiola** is a Tongan Australian writer from Sydney, Australia. She is a mother and early childhood educator with a Diploma of Early Childhood Education and a Bachelor of Social Science from Swinburne University of Technology. Her poem 'O Daughter of Oceania' won the 2021 Mayoral Creative Writing Prize, and her work has been featured on SBS Voices and Storycasters, *Colournary* Magazine. Sela is a member of Sweatshop in Western Sydney.

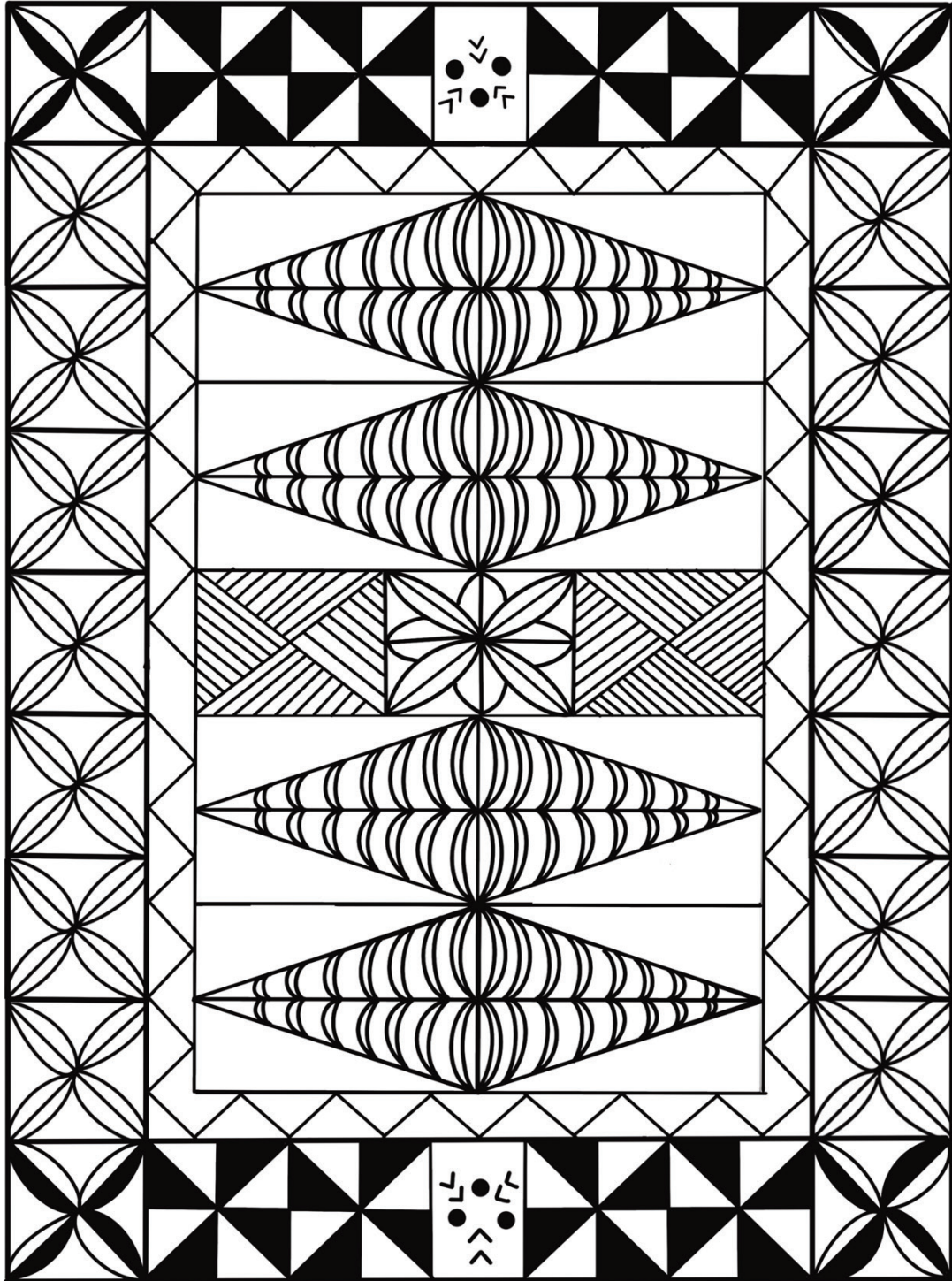
## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Yani Agustina was born in Bandung, a small city in West Java, Indonesia. Growing up with manga and storybooks inspired her to work in creative fields, and she decided to follow her passion for art and creativity after resigning from being a banker in 2020. She is a self-taught illustrator and uses digital media with a traditional look. Outside of her illustration work, she enjoys running, coffee shop-hopping and feeding a stray cat. Follow her on Instagram @anavrin.illustration

# WORKSHEETS

## WORKSHEET 1. COLOUR THIS IMAGE

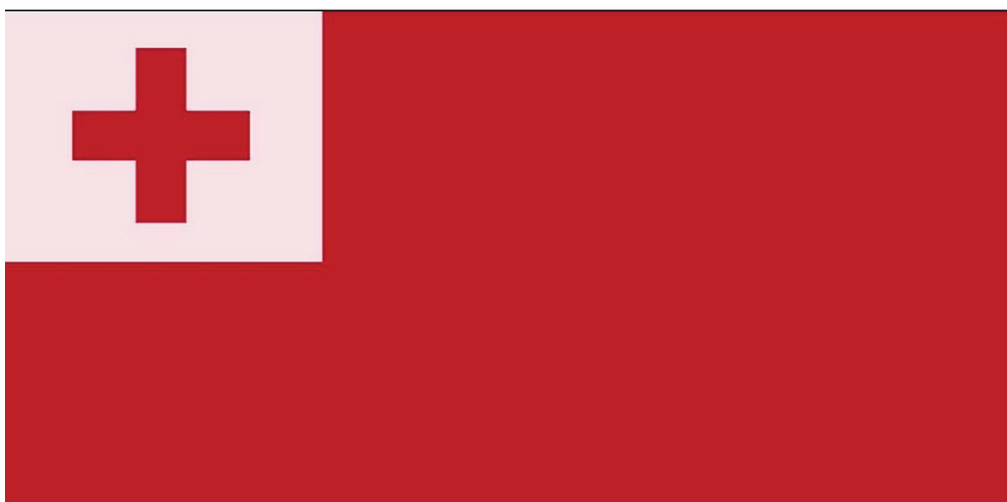
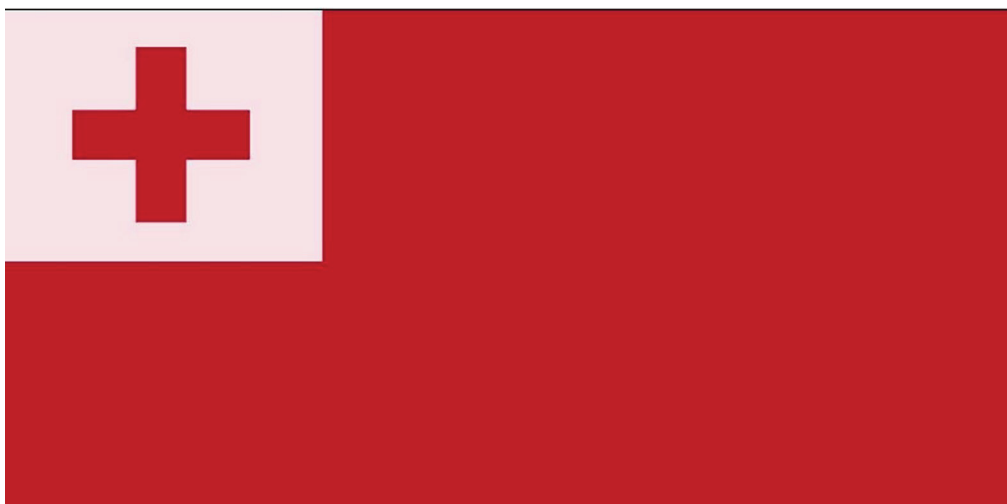
This pattern or motif is inspired by Tongan art. (Lupe's dress contains patterns as well.)  
Colour it in vibrant colours. You could then use the image to make a placemat (glued to a firm backing) or a framed image.





## WORKSHEET 2. TONGAN FLAG BUNTING

These are images of the Tongan flag. Print several copies and then cut them out and glue or staple them to ribbon to make a bunting decoration to celebrate Tonga Language Week.



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

**Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright** operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011 she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland, in 2012 the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Australia, and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award. In 2021 she was appointed a member of the Order of Australia.