

Indigenous Rap Teacher's Notes **B1**

Every year on Australia Day, 26 January, the country honours the Australians of the Year: citizens who have made a major contribution to making other people's lives better. This year's Young Australian of the Year is Danzal Baker, alias Baker Boy, a 22-year-old Indigenous Australian who raps in three languages. As well as achieving success in rap, dance and graffiti, Baker mentors Indigenous youth to help them achieve their dreams.

Pupils will learn about Danzal Baker, and the situation of Aboriginal people in Australia through an article and a video. They will explore the topic of Indigenous languages – 2019 is the United Nations Year of Indigenous Languages, and make a speech to convince some Australian students to learn an Indigenous language. You can go further with a poem.

Language and structures

- personal description
- music, dance and art
- emotions
- connecting events in the past
- expressing hopes for the future
- giving advice and suggestions

Culture

- Australian culture and history
- Australian aboriginal culture
- Indigenous languages

Reading, listening, writing

■ The comprehension activities on the article focus on making sure pupils understand the situation of indigenous people in Australia, and exploring Danzal Baker's biography.

Pupils can then “meet” Danzal Baker in a short video created for the Young Australian of the Year Award.

■ A pair of language activities introduce them to some Aboriginal words and the concept of pidgin as a communication

language. The latter allows them to practise techniques for working out the meaning of new words they come across.

■ To deepen pupils' understanding of the situation of native Australians, we have provided extensive background information at the end of this supplement, which you can use to answer pupils' follow-up questions (Activity E). Alternatively, you may want to divide the background topics between groups in the class. Each group can then be the “experts” on their topic. In turn, half the groups ask questions to obtain information, and play the role of experts.

■ The final task is to write a speech encouraging young people to learn some words in an Aboriginal language.

Going Further: Poetry

■ You may also wish, particularly with literary classes, to pursue the topic with a powerful poem by an Aboriginal writer: “The Past”, by Oodgeroo Noonuccal. You can find it by following this link:

<https://www.poetrylibrary.edu.au/poets/noonuccal-oodgeroo/the-past-0719068>

■ Pupils can be asked to write a poem based on what they have learned.

These were produced by students in 2nde:

Sorry for our crime (Louloua)

We hunted you without mercy
We took your land, your territory
Only thinking of our well-being
To become powerful, without feeling.

We killed all the insurgents
Endlessly using our guns
We thought you would fall on your knees
But today we know you are Aborigines.

We stole your children
And watched you cry heartbroken
We broke hundreds of families
Just to satisfy our selfish needs.

We are sorry to have told you all those lies
We are sorry not to have heard your cries
We hope you'll forgive us with time
We feel appalled at our crime.

Aborigines' past and future (Mylène)
Nature was screaming and crying in pain
At the loss of her children, its tears fell like rain.

Now people of the government regret,
And they know that we'll never forget.

But this moment of sadness and unhappiness
is over
Time of kindness and forgiveness is closer.
Indeed it is too late to maneuver.

It was, and now it is gone,
It was done and dealt with, a new era has
begun
So it is time to move on

To a better future.

Canadian indigenous rap:

Christie Charles aka Miss Christie Lee, a female rapper, is the first indigenous poet to be named Poet Laureate of Vancouver, Canada. She includes passages in her native tongue, Musqueam, in her raps, such as "My People of the Sea": Some of the lyrics are very understandable:

"This is a shout out to everyone
It's time to wake up
It's time to use your power
to help people create the change that we
need in the world today"

<https://soundcloud.com/crunch604/people-of-the-sea-christie-lee-c>

Transcript

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kY1mLFY5_Q

Onscreen text: Danzal Baker AKA Baker Boy, artist, musician, MC from Arnhem Land. Using his language to unify.

Danzal speaking indigenous language, onscreen translation:

Just bounce with it.
Don't be shame.
You have a good brain.
And a good heart.

Respect

Torres Straits.
Aboriginal.
Yolngu and Balanda.
Black and white.

In English: Coming together.

Standing equal.
Triggers mind-blowing survival mode human brain.
The greatest weapon in the world.

(Onscreen only: Your mind. Use it.)

Self-sustain, knowledge, it's loaded.

Standing on everyone's shoulders.

(Onscreen only: His story.)

History.

Indigenous.

Should be taught.

I do much I can.

Teach through dancing, performing, being on the stage.

Expressing feelings of me.

Australia has more than one language.

English is my third language.

Speak Djambarrpuyngu and Burarra*.

You know, working through youth, youth work, through remote communities in

Australia, and seeing different communities

speaking indigenous language is beautiful. It

makes me feel really proud.

It's who we are, and where we're from, from Australia.

Danzal speaking Indigenous language,

onscreen translation:

Different races.

Different coloured.

I want for us, we, to come together.

* *Djambarrpuyngu* is one of the *Yolnu Matha* family of languages, and *Burarra* is the language of a neighbouring part of Arnhem Land.

Solutions

A.1. Options: Natives, the first people who lived in a country before settlers arrived and often claimed possession of the land. Their rituals, their language, spirituality, art: painting, dancing, music. Issues: their status, their assimilation, their adjustment to modern world, their land.

2. Options: New Zealand: the Maoris

Australia: the Aborigines, Aboriginal people

USA: Native Americans (rather than Indians)

Canada: First Nations, Inuit

South Africa: the Zulu, the Xhosa, the Sotho...

B.1. a. Every year on 26th January.

b. Citizens who are honoured because they have helped other people.

c. In the Northern Territory.

d. 25.5%

e. 3%

f. European colonisers arrived.

g. The Stolen Generation refers to the Aboriginal children who were taken away from their families (in the twentieth century) and forcibly taken to boarding schools far from their families where they punished if they spoke their indigenous language.

2.a. Danzal

b. Baker

c. Baker Boy

d. twenty-two

e. Arnhem Land/Northern Territory

f. Rap, dance and graffiti

g. Young Australian of the Year

h. He speaks English and two indigenous languages.

i. He uses *Yolnu Matha*, which is his mother tongue, and English.

j. His single "Marryuna": 17th in the top 100 tracks of the year in Australia

k. 50 Cent and Dizzee Rascal asked him to tour with them.

l.1. To mentor Indigenous youth to help them achieve their dreams. **2.** To show that indigenous culture is alive and valuable.

3. To help young people express themselves by offering them one-week projects using music. **4.** To encourage white people to learn Indigenous languages so that they can connect with Indigenous communities. **5.** To bridge the gap between different people in Australia.

3.a. True: "Baker mentors Indigenous youth to help them achieve their dreams." (l.5-6)

- b. False: “He struggled to be fluent rapping in English. It wasn’t until he tried rapping in Yolngu Matha, his first language...” (l.14-15)
- c. False: “in Yolngu Matha, his first language, the rap began to flow.” (l.15-16)
- d. True: “He was a dancer from a young age.”(l.11)
- e. True: “only 17 (Indigenous languages) are still spoken as native tongues out of approximately 250 that existed ...in 1788.” (l.22-24)
- f. False: “they were punished if they didn’t speak English. (l.26)
- g. True: “ ..to round the worldit shows that Australia has native languages here and everyone speaks it.” (l.34-35)
- h. False: “he hopes Balanda, white people, will be curious... and then learn the language” (l.36-37)
- i. True: “This message goes out to my fellow young Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous girls and boys. “ (l.41)
- j. True: “With love and respect we have the power to shape the future and make Australia a place...where we stand united.” (l.44-45),

C.1. Danzal Baker uses Indigenous Australian words and English words, sometimes in the same sentence.

2. aka: b **MC:** a

3.a. unify **b.** brain

4.a. knowledge, teach.

b. dancing, (being on the) stage

5.a. beautiful, proud **b.** who – where

6. It’s important to learn about your culture and other cultures. You can use art to express your feelings. He wants people to respect each other and come together/unite/unify.

D.1. a. kangaroo **b.** boomerang **c.** didgeridoo
d. koala **e.** dingo

2.1. e **2.** l **3.** j **4.** i **5.** h **6.** a **7.** b **8.** c **9.** d **10.** k
11. g **12.** f

F. The students should **address their audience** and ought to use **advice** and **suggestions:**

You should +BV; You ought to + BV; Why don’t you + BV; What about + V-ing; Wouldn’t it be a good idea to + BV

Rhetorical questions: Hadn’t you better + BV.

Question tags

Idiomatic expressions like: Better late than never; If you think you can’t, try, try and try again!

Background information for Activity E

1. Origins:

It is hard to know exactly when **indigenous communities arrived in Australia** but it is estimated between **70,000 and 40,000 years BP** (Before Present). The first *homo sapiens* may have arrived by sea from Asia, when the sea level was very low. Australia has had its present shape only for 6,000 years. What we know for sure is that Aborigines who lived in the arid areas developed a very precise knowledge of their environment, the fauna and the flora in order to survive. Still today they can find enough food in the bush without having to grow vegetables or own cattle.

Before the arrival of the British colonisers led by Captain James Cook in the 18th century, claiming possession of the continent, Aborigines never used written language. Aborigines used to sing, dance and perform music. They sometimes painted their bodies, to show they were members of a clan or painted in the sand, and more rarely they painted the walls of caves and stone galleries. The oldest paintings date back to 18,000 years ago. Some show fish which might coincide with the end of the

Ice Age around 10,000 years ago. Today Aboriginal people still use eucalyptus bark to draw mythical stories, but there are numerous secret myths which can't be shown to a large public. The rule is that secrecy is a necessity to preserve the sacred aspect of those stories. Moreover there are stories that only women know and others only for men.

For western people, the ancient art forms and the contemporary paintings may seem abstract or non-figurative, especially those from the Outback. But for Aborigines they bear deep meanings: they tell the stories of **founding myths**, very often showing the migration of animals on the continent. In spite of the many differences among clans, there have been networks of cultural exchanges related to rituals and family bonds which resulted in **mingling words and customs**. That is the reason why even though there are so many spoken languages, they do have some common points.

2. Myths, music and dance:

It is believed Aborigines were both **fascinated by and resentful of** the white settlers. They were mostly a nomadic population, hunters and gatherers, therefore **spiritualism** has always been more important in their society than the accumulation of goods. The key to spirituality being the constant **reiteration of the myths through dance and songs**.

Aborigines are **not talkative** people. For instance widows take a **vow of silence**. It is **forbidden to utter the name of the dead** during mourning time. If the dead person's name is the same as an object, **the word for that object must be changed**. And all the other people named similarly will have to be called a **collective name**, at least for several months.

“**Corroboree**” is the word used to talk about the **Dreamtime rituals and the ceremonies** that are celebrated with dances and songs. The **dancers' bodies** are painted and covered with clay. The **music follows the rhythm** of the clapping together of boomerangs and clap sticks and the hoarse sound of **the didgeridoo, a hollow wooden tube**. The master then starts singing a verse that the other singers repeat together. The stanza finishes with a vigorous “Ee-Ya” sung by everyone.

3. Two centuries of sufferings, loss and mistreatments and lack of recognition: organising protest

The **Indigenous population** in Australia: Estimated at 770,000 at the time of the settlers' arrival in 1788.

93,200 in 1900

427,000 in 2001

650,000 in 2016. (Last census)

3.3% of the whole Australian population today

Unlike New Zealand or North America, colonisers never signed treaties with Australian Aboriginal people in order to occupy the land, and so Aboriginal communities have struggled to get legal recognition of their rights. Aboriginal people were not even counted in the Australian census until 1967.

The **first protest movement** was created in **the 1920s**, the AAPA (Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association) with the support of some white activists. In 1935 the AAL (Australian Aboriginal League) was founded in Victoria. In **1938**, the “**Day of Mourning**” was declared in protest at 150 years of callous treatment and the seizure of land. During the Second World War thousands of Aborigines took part in the war but were not

paid equally as the white soldiers.

In the **1960s**, many Aborigines were encouraged to go and live in towns for “better integration”. But knowing they would be unable to find jobs, they preferred to stay in their communities in order to keep up with their culture, their language, their attachment to their ancestors’ land. In **1965** the **Freedom Riders** managed to **raise awareness** among the public about the discrimination Aborigines were victims of.

They claimed recognition of their rights.

Finally in 1975 a Labour Party Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, supported Aborigines and the “**Racial Discrimination Act**” was a **milestone on the road to progress** by declaring illegal any kind of discrimination. In 1972 Aborigines opened an “**Aboriginal Embassy**”, a tent set up opposite the old Canberra Parliament, ironically testifying that they felt like strangers on their own land, which they had been deprived of because of so many restrictions by non-Aborigines. Nowadays they are still trying to recuperate their land.

4. Progress towards Reconciliation

After two centuries of ill- treatment and violence in reservations, Indigenous people officially became **Australian citizens in 1967**, and it is only in **1997** that they were **recognised as Native Australians**.

The **Aboriginal flag was created in 1972**: black for the colour of their skin, red like the colour of the sand in the Outback, and the colour of bloodshed, yellow for the sun that gives life.

As another instance Ayers Rock, the **mystical monolith** in central Australia, was officially given back to the Aborigines for whom it is sacred in 1985, and is now known by the name used by its traditional owners: **Uluru**. A legal ban on climbing Uluru will come into

force in October 2019.

Since **1988**, every **26th of May** is **National Sorry Day**, a popular movement to say **sorry for the Stolen Generation** also known as Stolen Children. Between **1860 and the 1960s**, between 10 and 30 per cent of children of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent were removed from their families by the Australian Federal and State government agencies and church missions. The stated aim of the resocialisation programme was to improve integration into modern society. They were placed in orphanages, whose counsellors were supposed to transform the children into “well integrated little Australians”, **forbidding them to speak their own language**, and compelling them to become Christians “for their own good”. The lighter-skinned children were thought to be assimilated into white society. However there was no tangible improvement in the social position of the removed children as compared to the non-removed. A successful film, based on a true story, tells about the flight of three girls who went on a long walk through the desert from their settlement to their mother’s camp (*Rabbit-Proof Fence*).

In **1992**, indigenous people won **their most significant battle** when the Supreme Court rejected the notion of “terra nullius” and ruled that Aborigines could be entitled to **reclaim some of their land**.

In **2000** the initiative of “**Reconciliation**” was supported in a massive march of 250,000 people on the Sydney Harbor Bridge which unfortunately had little effect on the government’s decisions to meet the requests of the Aborigines. At the end of **the 2000 summer Olympic Games** the rock band **Midnight Oil**, as well as Aboriginal athlete **Cathy Freeman**, tried to highlight the Aborigines’ plight, wearing tee-shirts with the word “Sorry” written on them.

It was only on February 2008 that **Prime Minister Kevin Rudd** eventually presented the country's apologies for "the wrongs committed in the past" hoping his official words would heal the grief and unite all Australians. Listen to the moving speech: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKWfiFp24rA>

In 2018, Prime Minister **Scott Morrison** called for a **new national day** recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights, while defending his support for Australia Day to remain on 26th January, saying "indulgent self-loathing does not make Australia stronger" The idea has attracted criticism from a number of Indigenous people, including Gunnai-Kurnai and Gundijmara Lidia Thorpe, a Greens MP, who said creating a separate day for Aboriginal people "doesn't create unity."

Some progress has been achieved for better understanding, however there are still many issues faced by the Indigenous population: unemployment, illiteracy, and domestic violence, excessive consumption of alcohol, drugs, depression and suicide in prisons. There are still symbolic steps to take to promote racial healing between indigenous and non-indigenous populations.