

# DUSTS ECHOES

The Be



A **STUDYGUIDE** BY ROBERT LEWIS



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# TEACHER'S GUIDE

## Brief summary

*A mysterious stranger is too shy to enter a camp, but does so when he discovers that he is related to the people.*

The main theme is the importance of kinship and identification with a community.



## The original story

The camp has been upset because some mysterious thing or person has been roaming around. Looking, peeking, hiding, scaring, being naughty, who is this person, they wonder. He has left no tracks. They don't know him.

One afternoon two brothers walk down towards the billabong. They are quiet and watchful, they have powers to look past the white gum trees, the grey coolabah trees and the dark stringy bark trees. All the silhouettes of the trees are scary looking.

The brothers stare through the trees and into the shapes until they can see the Be. Looking, looking, until they see him and say, 'Come out of there, we can see you, no need to hide from us!'

Be man slowly comes out. Some of the animals from the bush follow him. The wallaby and the white cockatoo.

Be man starts singing and the two boys become the two animals and they start dancing the corroboree with Be man.

They see that Be man is part of their family, so all the other people from the camp come and dance the corroboree too, dancing all painted up like the white cockatoo and all other animals. They dance the willie willie tornado, the fish, the pigeon dance ... all the animals.

This is how the song, *Bongiling Bongiling* came to be.

## What this story means

On one level, *The Be* is the simple story of a prankster whose corroboree – song and dance – helps him become part of a new family.

On another level, *The Be* reminds us that humans and animals are connected and belong to a place. And that songs and dances help build and maintain the necessary relationships between humans, nature and country.

### Where this story comes from

Jimmy Wesan received this story from his father. It comes from the riverside country around Bulman, which is situated 200 kilometres north of Wugularr (Beswick) in the Northern Territory of Australia. Because it comes from his country (Dalabon country), Jimmy is responsible for this story in the same way that he is responsible for everything in that country.

## Suggested classroom activities

### Introducing the story

**I** Tell the students the original story. Ask them to create a rough storyboard setting out how they would tell the story themselves. Students then watch the film.

### OR

Have the students reorganize the summary sentences on the Student Worksheet to tell a coherent story. Students then watch the film.

### Understanding the story

**2** Now have students answer the comprehension questions on the Student Worksheet (Questions 1-3), or from the online quiz.

### Finding meanings, reflection and analysis

**3** Students can now discuss the themes and issues set out in questions 4-9, including their analysis of how the filmmakers use the medium to tell the story.

### Follow-up activities

**4** Teachers can select from the activities list in the *What is ... 'Dust Echoes'* study guide to suggest appropriate follow-up activities for this story.

# DUST ECHOES



# STUDENT WORKSHEET



**Title:** *The Be*

## Sorting out the story

1 Here is a summary of the story. But it is mixed up. Rearrange the sentences and number them 1-4 so that they tell the story in the correct sequence or order.

**Order No.**      **Summary**

	The Be man recognizes the dance and joins in, and all the other people from the camp also join in.
	The people's camp is upset because there is an unseen person scaring them.
	Two brothers, who have special powers, go looking for this mysterious person.
	They see him, but he is very scared of them, until they start to perform a dance.

## Understanding what this story is about

2 Here are some more questions about the story. To answer these, you will sometimes need to look carefully at how the animators have depicted the scene.

- What is the problem in the camp?
- Why are the people scared?
- What special powers do the brothers have?
- What do they do after they have discovered the Be Man?
- How does he react to this?

## Understanding what this story means

3 Aboriginal stories may exist to:

- teach young people about natural events
- warn them about dangers
- explain relationships and identity
- teach them about the law and right behaviour

Which of these is *The Be* trying to achieve? Give reasons to support your answer.

4 The stories are also about ideas. Write one sentence to explain what this story tells us about each of these:

- Identity
- Belonging
- Community.

## STUDENT WORKSHEET CONTINUED

5 *The Be* tells us about shyness, about not fitting in, and about welcoming people. Create a story/poem/song/dance/art work about friendship, helping and belonging.

### What does the story help us understand about Aboriginal people's lives?

6 What does the film help us understand about any of these topics or aspects of traditional Aboriginal life and society?

- Food
- Work
- Family
- Society
- Law and rules
- Duties
- Spiritual/religious beliefs
- Education
- Technology (tools and weapons)
- Relationships with others
- Roles
- Emotions.

Write one sentence for any of these that you think is touched on in the story.

### Understanding how the story has been told

7 What were your reactions or feelings during the story?

8 You had these reactions and feelings not only because of the story itself, but also the way the story was told and shown to you.

Here are some of the elements or parts of a film that can influence you. Divide them among your group, and have group members report back on them.

- The film's **graphic style** – What do the people look like? What does the background look like? What colours are used?
- The film's use of **music** – Is it traditional Aboriginal music or modern music? How does the music influence your reactions? Is it effective?
- What **other sounds** are in the film – Are natural sounds used? Is there any other sound, such as people's voices?
- The use of **viewpoint** – There is no camera filming the action in each story, but you can see the artists presenting the images as if there is. What are the

'camera' angles that are used? Does the 'camera' remain at ground level, or does it change angles? Does it move? What is the effect or impact of changing our viewpoint as we watch the film?

- **Narration** – Some of the stories have a narrator. What sort of voice is it? How does the narrator tell the story? Does he just speak, or are there other elements that he includes? Is it effective?

### Applying the story to your life

9 *Dust Echoes* is one way that we are bringing everyone back to the same campfire – black and white. We are telling our stories to you in a way you can understand, to help you see, hear and know. And we are telling these stories to ourselves, so that we will always remember, with pride, who we are.

– Tom E. Lewis, Djilpin Arts Aboriginal Corporation.

The makers of the story want it to be a part of your life. Do you think the story has any relevance to your life today? Explain your ideas.



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editor@atom.org.au

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