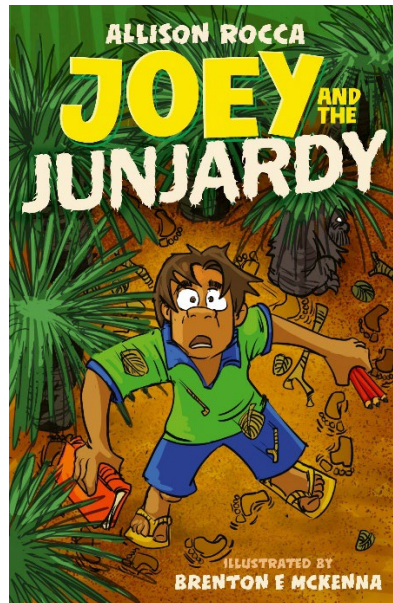


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***JOEY AND THE JUNJARDY***

Allison Rocca

illustrations by Brenton E McKenna

**Teachers' Notes**

Prepared by Cara Shipp, a practising teacher,  
in context with the Australian curriculum

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**SYNOPSIS**

Joey Gibbs is always up for a laugh. What isn't funny: the Big Trouble he caused at his old school that meant his family had to move to Coolibah Creek. Joey's going to keep his head down this time. New school, new mates, new start. But trouble seems to have a way of finding him.

When his sister and cousin start getting mysteriously pranked, Joey looks for answers from his Wakka Wakka culture. He discovers he's caught the attention of the Junjardy, a hairy little trickster. Joey can't resist making mischief again with his secret partner in crime. But as the jokes spiral out of control, he must work out what the Junjardy wants with him before disaster strikes.

Action-packed with loads of humour and heart, *Joey and the Junjardy* shows us how the smallest of creatures can help you to stand tall and proud.

**THEMES**

- Strength of family
- Strength of culture
- Connection to Country
- Identity and belonging
- Staying true to oneself and strong in one's identity
- People from different backgrounds coming together and finding common ground
- Respect for others
- The importance of storytelling in preserving cultures and family histories

**STUDY NOTES***Connections to Art and HPE/Health curriculum*

One of Joey's strengths and vehicles for connection is his drawing. His treasured sketchbook reminds him of his family members and keeps him strong. It is through drawing that he connects with his new best friend at his new school, attracts a group of students to form a drawing club and encourages collaboration with the school bully. Joey also unites the town through his mural design about significant places in the town.

Engaging in art activities brings many health and wellbeing benefits, and art and storytelling have special cultural and spiritual meaning for First Nations people.

*Connections to HASS (History and Geography) & English*

First Nations creation stories and songs help to teach about past and present and can be seen as examples of narratives about past and present life as well

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as narratives about connection to place / significant and special places. They can guide children and teach lessons about how to behave appropriately and how to respect and care for your family, history and Country.

### *Connections to Science*

Joey helps his Uncle Eddie to care for their local Country, cleaning up Coolibah Creek and ensuring it is flowing as it should.

Connections could be made to examples of First Nations practices in caring for Country and waterways by engaging with your local Indigenous Ranger groups and reading the following resources:

- <https://www.thelivingknowledgeplace.com.au/>
- [Baime's Ngunnhu](#), video interviewing Aunty June Barker, produced by The Department of Environment and Heritage, 2009
- [Country Needs People](#), non-profit organisation supporting Indigenous ranger projects

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### Activity: Book orientation

Discuss the book cover:

- green, bushland
- boy in school uniform (we assume Joey)
- footprints
- a menacing-looking tree behind Joey
- books/pencils and leaves and sticks swirling around
- the image is a high-angle shot looking down at Joey to make him seem vulnerable or small

Have the students discuss and predict the story: Who is Joey? Who is the Junjardy? Is Joey in danger? What kind of person is Joey? (E.g. likes drawing, possibly likes exploring the bush)

Discuss the dedication: 'To my grandparents, my first and favourite storytellers.' Who is important to the author? How might they have influenced her writing?

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Activity: Situating the story

In Chapter 3 we find out that Joey and his family have returned to his mother's ancestral Country, Wakka Wakka. Joey finds out that both he and his teacher, Mr Wattle, share identity as proud Wakka Wakka people.

Locate the language group/Country of your school area on the [AIATSIS Languages map](#) and discuss the location of that community in relation to your school and/or where your students live. You may find out more about the language if it has an entry in the [Gambay](#) First Languages map.

Discuss how there are many different languages across Australia and how some Aboriginal groups are fluent in their language while others are relearning it. If possible, have a local Aboriginal Elder speak to the class about the local language, how it is spoken today and how it may have been impacted by colonisation (e.g. many people were punished for speaking their language).

Draw students' attention to the glossary at the back of the book and explain how there is a mixture of Wakka Wakka language and Aboriginal English/slang (e.g. gammin', Murri). Discuss how it is a strength if students can speak more than one language or dialect. Invite students to share any languages or dialects or types of slang they speak at home.

Activity: Connection to Country

The *Common Ground* website has an article explaining connection to Country: <https://www.commonground.org.au/article/connection-to-animals-and-country>

It also has a collection of stories that celebrate First Nations storytelling and connection to Country in a series with teacher resources called 'Dreamy': [Dreamy | Mindful stories from First Nations Storytellers](#)

Using the above resources and, preferably, a local Indigenous knowledge holder such as the local Indigenous Rangers in your region, learn about what 'connection to Country', 'Dreaming' and 'creation' mean at a basic level (these are complex concepts that First Nations people themselves spend their lives learning).

- Discuss Joey's connection to Country and refer to the description of how it makes him feel on pp. 35–36 (cool, quiet, slowed heartbeat, proud, a small part of something bigger).
- Discuss the difference it makes when Joey is sent to work on Country with Uncle Eddie after being suspended from school.

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- Discuss how members of Joey's family and his teacher, Mr Wattle, experience and express their connection to Country.
- Why is it special to be living on your own Country, the place of your ancestors?
- Can anyone have a connection to a special place in their life? Invite students to draw or make a collage of images about their own connection to a place, annotating it with two to three sentences about why it is their special place and what is special about it for them.

Activity: Literary techniques

Use the opening of the story to discuss the difference between literal and figurative language: 'My skin was melting. Not melting for real – that would be messy and just plain gross.' (p. 1)

Discuss what a simile and a metaphor is and how they are different from a literal meaning and are used to help describe or paint an image in the reader's mind.

Share and discuss the following examples, and allow students to draw the imagery as they see it in their minds:

- [the school] was a concrete pimple that had popped up in the middle of a long, dusty road (p. 1)
- like a tap-dancing wombat; like popcorn kernels (p. 2)
- my mouth was as dry as the red dust of the outback (p. 8)

Allow students to work in pairs to find more examples on pp. 11–12, pp. 34–35, p. 61.

Regroup as a class and invite two or three pairs to share their findings. Also ask students if anyone disagreed about whether a sentence qualified as a simile or metaphor – discuss why they disagreed and clarify together as a class.

Invite students to either sketch the following scene or storyboard it for adaptation to television:

The lunchtime bell rang and in seconds me and Beth got swarmed as a hundred kids surged past us to the field. Kids in the snot-green uniform darted about the land like ants fighting over crumbs. Teachers prowled along the edge, occasionally throwing in a new football when a scuffle broke out. It reminded me of wild animals at the zoo, fighting over hunks of raw meat thrown into the cage by the zookeepers. (p. 23)

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Discuss which parts are examples of simile, metaphor or just descriptive writing. If appropriate for the class, introduce the idea of an 'analogy' and discuss how the zoo description could be an analogy.

In a culminating activity, arrange a 'wall' of quotes and students' drawings that have been collected throughout this exploration of literary techniques. Invite students to select their favourite and share why they like it with a partner. Summarise by discussing as a class how good authors use many different writing techniques to make their stories descriptive and engaging for the reader.

Activity: Artist's style

Invite students to work in pairs and discuss which is their favourite illustration in the book? Why is this their favourite?

Discuss the use of dark and light and the sense of movement in the book's illustrations. How do these illustrations complement the book and help to tell the story?

Show students Brenton E McKenna's website. Share his bio and look at his gallery of work: [www.brentonmckenna.com](http://www.brentonmckenna.com). What are some features of McKenna's style that students notice? How are his other works similar to or different from the works in *Joey and the Junjardy*?

Activity: Sketching the Junjardy

Invite students to select one of the Junjardy's pranks and sketch the scene. Encourage students to be creative and use their own style (they do not need to copy McKenna's style). As explained in the Author's Note, there are many stories across Australia about creatures like the Junjardy. Therefore, the way students draw the Junjardy can be up to their own interpretation. The appearance doesn't matter – the main purpose of these stories is to teach children or warn in some way, and the creatures all have different names and descriptions depending on which Country you go to. First Nations people see these as real stories, not myths and legends.

Activity: Setting and characters

Photocopy key sections for students to work on and annotate in small groups.

- Description of the new school (pp. 1–2)
- Description of Mr Wattle (pp. 10–11)

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- Description of Bruno (pp. 11–12, pp. 46–47)
- Description of Joey and his sketchbook (pp. 14–15, p. 12, p. 25)
- Description of Country (pp. 35–36, pp. 161–162)
- Description of the Junjardy (pp. 52–53, p. 94, pp. 117–118)

Create six groups and give each group a different section to look at. Have students underline key words and summarise in one to two sentences what this description says about the setting or character and how it makes the reader feel.

Groups can then present their findings to the class. Conclude with a class discussion about how authors develop a sense of place and character in stories.

Discuss how the descriptions of Country in this story go beyond just describing a setting: it is like the Country *is* a character. While Western interpretations might call this ‘personification’, First Nations interpretations may see this as an expression of connection to Country, in that all living things and people are related. A good illustration of this concept is in the picture book [Brother Moon](#) by Maree McCarthy Yoelu and Samantha Campbell.

Activity: Racism and exclusion

Discuss some examples of racism and exclusion that Joey experiences at the school (see pp. 16–17, p. 49, pp. 135–136). How can we all work together to stop this kind of behaviour happening in schools and in the community? For support with anti-racist lesson activities, see the website: [Racism No Way](#).

Activity: Suspense and drama

Authors build tension and make the reader feel on edge or worry for characters by creating suspense and drama. Discuss Chapters 10 and 11 where the Junjardy causes mayhem and Joey has memories of the Big Trouble. Also see pages 76–77 when the Junjardy is following Joey and Peggy home from school.

Activity: Mapping Joey’s growth

Invite students to create a visual timeline of how Joey grows and changes through the novel. They can draw or use Canva. Recap and support students to consider:

- How Joey introduces himself in the first few chapters (we learn that he is a trickster who likes playing pranks)

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- How Joey takes on responsibility and reflects on his mistakes when he is sent out on Country with Uncle Eddie (Chapters 34 and 35)
- How Joey steps up at the school assembly, supports Bruno, finds common ground and no longer feels the need to be a class clown (Chapters 37, 38 and 39)

Discuss with students how important it was for Joey to have connection to Country and culture, and good connections with caring adults (Mr Wattle, his parents, Uncle Eddie). These connections grounded Joey and helped him to grow and mature and find the right path.

Activity: Text self-connection

Students can choose a section of the story that they personally connect to because it is something they have experienced too.

Have students write a paragraph about how and why they connect to this section.

Example sections might include:

- The Big Trouble (Chapter 32)
- Racism/bullying/teasing
- Sibling fights (pp. 80–81)

Activity: Stories keep culture alive

In the Author's Note, the author emphasises how important family stories are to keep culture alive and help everyone understand who they are and where they belong.

Support students to create their own family history/stories in a diorama/tableaux/artwork. Students may need to compile some interview questions to take home in order to gather information for this task. If appropriate, invite families to come to class and support their child in the activity before enjoying a shared morning or afternoon tea, modelling and emphasising the importance of community and togetherness, and showing how everyone from all walks of life can belong.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

[Common Ground](#) leads a national celebration of Dreaming stories from October to November each year. Schools can sign up to receive five stories and

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teaching resources to celebrate First Nations storytelling, connection to Country and Dreaming.

**AUTHOR MOTIVATION**

I felt compelled to write *Joey and the Junjardy* as a teacher and mother with Wakka Wakka and Kaanju heritage.

I wrote the story I wish I could have read growing up as an Aboriginal child in white, working-class suburbia. As an avid reader, I longed to see characters like myself and my family reflected in the pages of a book. It wasn't until later in life that I understood the profound damage this lack of representation can have. Representation is especially crucial during the formative years of childhood and early adolescence when a child's sense of identity and belonging is being shaped. I really care about getting more books featuring Aboriginal characters and their cultural stories into the hands of young readers.

I've worked as a primary school teacher for over a decade, so I wrote a story I knew would have a treasured place in classrooms and school libraries. I was intentional in creating a contemporary school setting with relatable social conflict, age-appropriate humour and teachable moments woven into the plot. Right from the beginning, I envisioned characters who represented the many wonderful and unique students I taught every day – not just Joey through his culture, but also his friend Beth, who has a physical disability.

*Joey and the Junjardy* is a story for teachers and students to enjoy together, whether as a read-aloud or to deconstruct as part of an English lesson. It has clear links to the Australian Curriculum. I imagine the story sparking important conversations that support children's social and emotional development. It's also a fun and engaging story, so it's my hope that it inspires children to pick up other books to read too.

Most of all, I wrote this book for my children and their future children as a way to preserve the stories of my ancestors. Becoming a mother has made me reflect on the stories from my own upbringing that have shaped me. The Junjardy is just one of many stories passed down by my late grandparents. I wanted to honour them and make sure they are a part of future generations' lives. Storytelling is the beating heart of my culture. While I may not be a musician, visual artist or dancer, the written word is how I carry the memories, traditions and culture of my people. The sad reality is a lot of cultural knowledge is fading. This is a story I didn't want to lose.

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Allison Rocca is a primary school teacher who has taught in classrooms from the 'burbs of Australia to remote villages in Asia and castle-like academies in Oxford. She is a descendant of Wakka Wakka and Kaanju people and her upbringing was rich in storytelling. Allison likes to draw on the stories passed down by her highly respected Elder grandparents to write fiction for children and young adults. She lives and writes on Yuggera/Turrbal Country, Brisbane.

**ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR**

Brenton E McKenna is a Yawuru artist and writer from Broome who fell in love with comic books at a young age. He studied visual arts at Goulburn TAFE, and in 2011 became the first ever published Indigenous graphic novelist with the release of *Uby's Underdogs: The Legend of the Phoenix Dragon*. When he's not drawing, Brenton dedicates his time to educating young people through creative storytelling workshops.