

OUR LANDS

NARM-JAAP

A FLINDERS STREET STATION HISTORY



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TEACHERS RESOURCES

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SYNOPSIS:

Part of the *Our Lands* series, *Narm-Jaap* is an illustrated non-fiction text that chronicles the history of Naarm's (Melbourne) Flinders Street Station and its site on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country. Prior to colonisation, the traditional owners gathered here on the banks of the Birrarung (Yarra River) to yarn, trade and hold ceremonies. Noticing the fish traps and huts of the Kulin Nation at this location, British colonisers soon decided on this for their new settlement. Before long, buildings and businesses emerged, and although white settlers and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people enjoyed trading and learning from one another, the diseases of the colonisers quickly decimated the Indigenous population by an estimated 80 percent. Those who survived were gradually pushed further from their traditional homeland.

The introduction of the railway to Victoria provided important infrastructure to the fledgling colony, and in 1901, construction began on Flinders Street Station. Designed with the needs of both the public and railway employees in mind, it has since been listed on the Victorian Heritage Register: a true icon of Australia and a place of enduring cultural significance.

THEMES:

First Nations Culture – Ceremony, Knowledge
Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People and Language
Kulin Nation
Australia – Colonisation; First Contacts
Flinders Street Station
Naarm/Melbourne
Transport; Railways
Treaty
Trade
Design

WRITING STYLE:

Narm-Jaap is a hybrid narrative non-fiction text that shares the history of the Flinders Street Station, including the land on which it stands. Factual and inclusive, it provides readers with facts about the sophisticated culture, knowledge and practices of the Kulin Nation and the impacts of colonisation on the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people. It also shares the story of the design and construction of this iconic building. Each page opening includes detailed illustrations and sidebars with additional information, making the text accessible and engaging to a range of audiences. It is suitable for middle and upper primary audiences.

LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM:

This book and the classroom activities provided are primarily relevant to the following areas of the Australian Curriculum:

Learning area	Year level
English	Years 3-6
Humanities and Social Sciences	Years 3-5
Design and Technologies	Years 3-6

AUTHOR'S NOTES:

Narm-Jaap: A Flinders Street Station History is an exploration of the history of a well-known place within the Australian continent. Many will recognise and know of the Flinders Street Station building in Naarm (Melbourne) with its green domes and iconic clocks, but most won't know the history of the station, the land it was built on, and the significance of this place for the Traditional Owners.

The idea for the Our Lands series came to me because I wanted to know about some of the iconic places in Australia, but I was particularly interested in the history before colonisation and from an Aboriginal lens. First Nations peoples have been here for over 65,000 years, where Country and place continue to be an integral part of culture. As an Aboriginal person from one side of my family, it felt unfair that so much of what I was taught in school was from a white, Western perspective. Teachings about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures were so limited, and though I learned some from my own family, even that was limited due to policies that forbade things such as use of language and ceremonial practices, as well as generational trauma.

As with *Tubowgule*, the first book in the Our Lands series, I didn't know much about the history of Narm-Jaap – the area that Flinders Street Station has been built on – and its significance for the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and the wider Kulin Nation. I have been astounded by the history we aren't taught and that isn't widely known, and so with this book I wanted to share the things I've learnt about this significant location and contribute to a growing awareness of the fuller history of Australia.

With *Narm-Jaap*, my hope is that readers gain knowledge of this special place and the history of it that started before colonisation. I want readers to see that although much was taken from the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, and their Country overtaken as they were forced out of Naarm, that their culture lives on and has continued. These places are beginning to be acknowledged for their cultural significance, and I hope that *Narm-Jaap* plays a small part in reclamation and celebration of Australia's First Peoples, cultures and connection to Country.

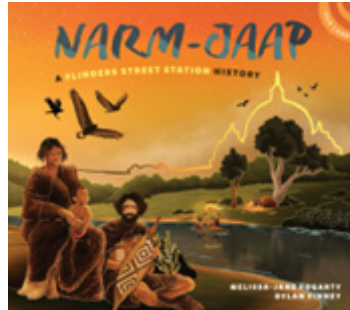
ILLUSTRATOR'S NOTES:

The illustrations in this book were created with deep respect for Country and for the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people, Traditional Custodians of the land through which the Birrarung flows and on which the city now stands. *Narm-Jaap* traces the history of this place from before colonisation through the construction of Flinders Street Station and into the present day, showing how Culture and Country continue to endure. I wanted to celebrate Blak joy and the vibrancy of Culture, both past and present. The sky appears across many pages as a reminder of Sky Country, while birds, canoes and figures act as quiet threads of continuity. The creator-eagle Bunjil and the ancestral crow Waang are woven through the story as motifs of kinship, law and belonging, honouring their place in Wurundjeri tradition and the balance they represent between land, water and sky.

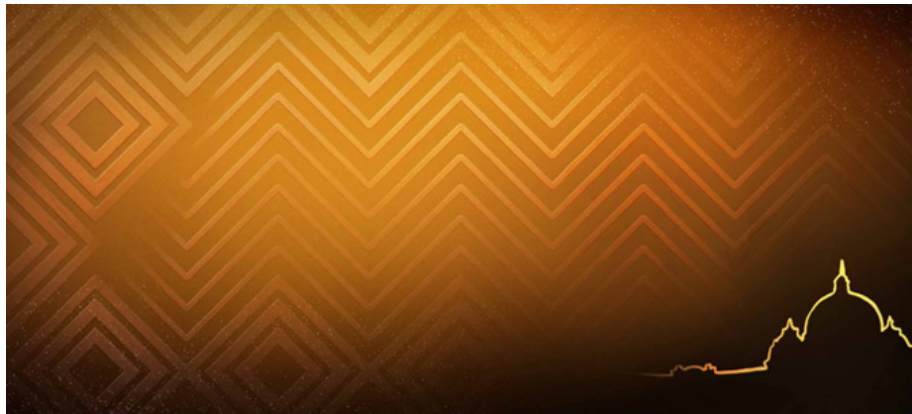
The creative process built on the same dawn-to-dusk structure used for *Tubowgule* but with a more refined and intentional approach. I worked digitally on my iPad using a range of brushes to capture the changing light, texture and rhythm of each scene – soft brushes for sky and water, sharper lines for architecture and detail. Historical sketches, reference materials and collaboration with the author and publisher informed the accuracy of clothing, objects and landscape. My hope is that readers see this place as one of continuing significance, where Culture lives on and where the joy, resilience and creativity of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people are felt in every page.

STUDY NOTES:

Before reading *Narm-Jaap*, carefully examine the front and back covers of the book. Discuss the gold line drawing that traces the shape of the landscape. What do you notice? Make predictions about the text. Complete a See Think Wonder thinking routine (see below) to capture your ideas. (<https://pz.harvard.edu/resources/see-think-wonder>)



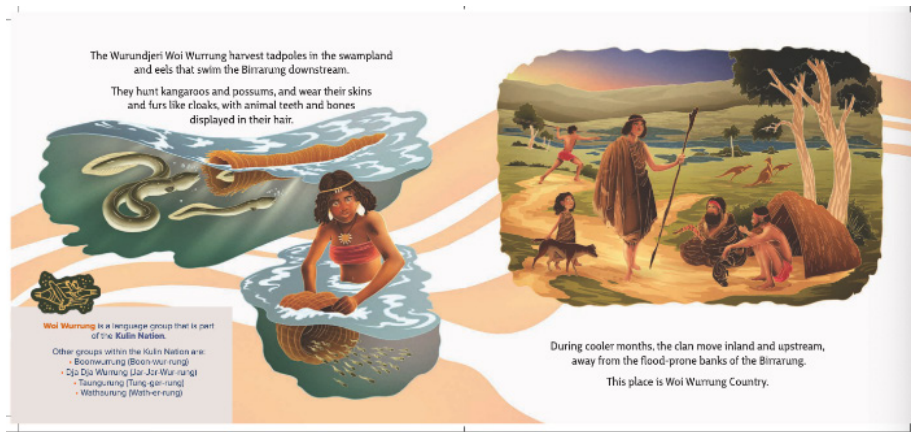
- After reading *Narm-Jaap*, discuss the endpapers. What is the connection between these patterns and the story of this site?



- With reference to the page opening below, discuss the sky and the shape emerging from the wispy smoke. How do such illustrations show the connection between the past and present? Discuss the importance of visual literacy when reading picture books.



- As you read *Narm-Jaap*, take note of the creator-eagle Bunjil and the ancestral crow Waang that are woven through the story as motifs of kinship, law and belonging. Discuss the illustrator's intent to honour their place in Wurundjeri tradition by including them in this way.
- What do page openings such as that below share about the sophisticated and sustainable practices of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people?



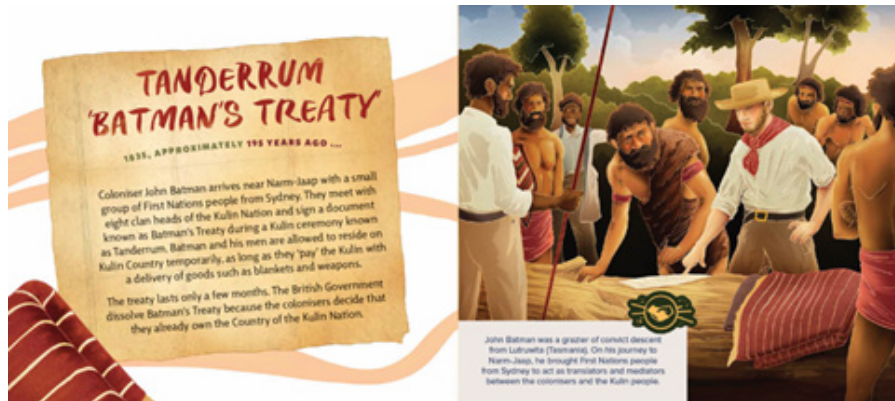
- Use the illustrations below to prompt a discussion about Narm-Jaap as an important meeting place. What are common meeting places in your local area, both now and in the past? What does this share about the importance of connection with one another?



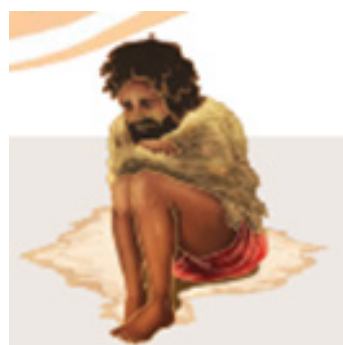
- When colonisers noticed the fish traps and huts of the people of the Kulin nation, they decided it would make the 'most suitable place for a settlement'. If you could speak with this group of colonisers today, what would you like to say to them about this decision? Why?



- Although it only lasted a few months, Batman's Treaty with the Kulin Nation sought to cooperate with the traditional owners. Why did the British Government dissolve this? In 2025, the state of Victoria became the first to introduce a formal, legally binding agreement between the First Peoples of Victoria and the state government. With older students, investigate this Treaty and how it aims, amongst other objectives, to address historical injustices. <https://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/treaty>



- Compare the illustrations below that show change over time and the impact of First Contacts with British Colonisers. What have been the impacts on the Kulin Nation of colonisation? How are such impacts still felt today? With reference to the centre image, what do you think the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people might have thought and felt as they looked across the river?



- Discuss the importance of transport in communities. How did the introduction of the rail system help Victoria and Australia more generally?
- What is the connection between the Gold Rush of 1851 and the growing need for transport? Use a Cause-Effect graphic organiser (see below) to help show your thinking.
- Using the sites below, find out more about James Fawcett and H.P.C. Ashworth and their winning design of the Flinders Street Station, including waterproofing measures. Compare these sources and evaluate their reliability.
 - <https://showmemelbourne.com.au/blog/ill-meet-you-under-the-clocks-flinders-st-station/>
 - https://find.slv.vic.gov.au/discovery/fulldisplay?vid=61SLV_INST:SLV&search_scope=slv_local&tab=searchProfile&context=L&docid=alma9939656963407636
 - <https://www.flindersstreetstation.com.au/under-the-clocks-stories.php>
 - <https://architectureau.com/articles/flinders-street-station-ballroom/>



- Discuss the importance of the Victorian Railways Institute offering care for over 3,000 VRI employees, including the provision of a library, ballroom, concert hall, games room, gym and nursery.



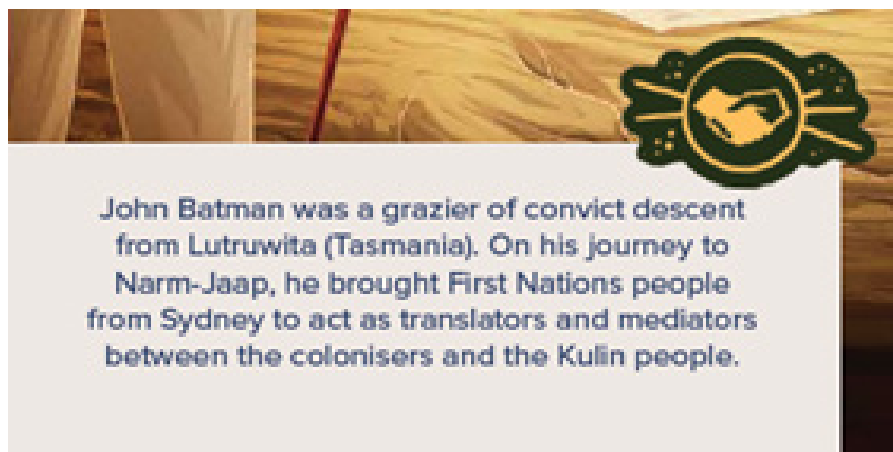
- With a partner, design a new railway station for your nearest capital city. Be innovative and creative in your ideations. Present your plans to a committee consisting of classmates.
- What does the 2018 discovery of almost 300 Aboriginal artefacts at the Metro Tunnel reveal about the importance of Narm-Jaap to the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Kulin Nation?



- Discuss the role of the ancient ceremony, Tanderrum, in reconciling the past, acknowledging the traditional ownership of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people and looking towards the future.



- As you read *Narm-Jaap*, observe the icons that accompany each of the sidebars. What do these icons represent? Use these icons to help retell *Narm-Jaap*.



- Which is your favourite page opening of *Narm-Jaap*? Why is this your favourite? Share with a friend.
- Using the historical notes at the end of the text, create an annotated timeline that traces the history of Narm-Jaap and its significance to the people of Naarm (Melbourne).
- How does the Flinders Street Station help meet the needs and wants of the people of Naarm? Suggest ways that it could do so even more effectively in the future.
- Visit the following websites to find out more about the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people and their culture:
 - <https://www.wurundjeri.com.au/>
 - <https://www.abc.net.au/kidslisten/programs/little-yarns/welcome-to-wurundjeri-woi-wurrung/105078050>
- As a companion text, read the first book in the Our Lands series, *Tubowgule*. Analyse the illustrator's use of the 'dawn to dusk' sky to share these stories.



See

What do you see?

Think

What do you think about that?

Wonder

What does it make you wonder?

GOLD RUSH

Cause

Effect

Gold discovered in Kulin
Country (Victoria)

More goods needed on the
Goldfields

Railway infrastructure
improves transportation