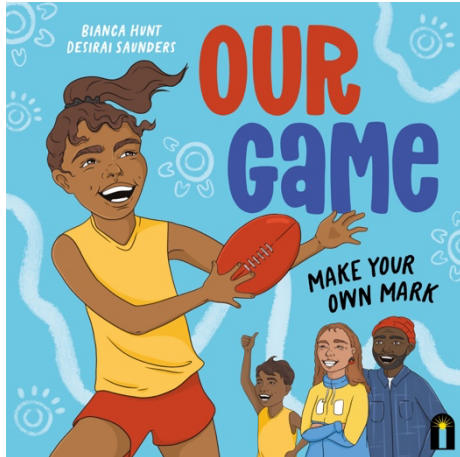


## Teacher's Notes



### OUR GAME

Written by Bianca Hunt

Illustrated by Desirai Saunders

Teacher's Notes by Bec Kavanagh

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### LEARNING OUTCOMES

#### RECOMMENDED FOR

Primary aged readers (ages 3-9, grades 1-2)

#### KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English, Health & Physical Education, History
- General capabilities:
  - AC9HP2P03
  - AC9E1LA08
  - AC9E2LA08
  - AC9E1LE01
  - AC9E2LE01
  - AC9E1LE02

### THEMES

- Football
- Community
- First Nations history
- Successful women
- Feeling nervous
- Confidence

### SYNOPSIS

Whitney loves playing footy, but when it comes to playing in a real team she's nervous. What if she's not good enough? Uncle Jas and Auntie Dawn try to cheer her up by sharing the connections between their culture and the game. Uncle Jas tells Whitney about Marngrook, and the role the game plays in bringing community together. Auntie Dawn takes Whitney and Julian to the MCG, sharing her knowledge about the First Nations players that have helped to make AFL history.

But on game day, Whitney still feels nervous. She's worried that she might let her team down, or that she'll be the reason they lose. Auntie Dawn reminds her that winning isn't the point – having a go and being proud of who you are is. That's all Whitney needs to hear to run out onto the field with her head held high.

*Our Game* is an uplifting story about the history of AFL and First Nations players, and the importance of community, confidence, and lifting each other up.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

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**Bianca Hunt** is the author of *Our Game: Make Your Own Mark*. She is also a TV presenter, media personality, interviewer and advocate, and an Indigenous Literacy Foundation and Wyanga Elders Ambassador. A proud Kamlaroi, Barkindji, Ballardong and Whadjuk woman, Bianca's unique upbringing playing music, competing in AFL, and undertaking dance training, has gifted her with the ability to genuinely connect with almost anyone. With a passion for hearing other people's stories and for sharing her own, Bianca has dedicated her career to uplifting First Nations people and platforming women in media. Her career spans sport, travel, fashion and music journalism. Notably, she has co-hosted NITV's *Yokayi Footy* and is a travel reporter for SBS's *Going Places with Ernie Dingo*.

**Desirai Saunders** is a Gunggari digital illustration artist based in Meanjin (Brisbane). Art helps her express herself when she can't find the words to do so – she often refers to her works as fragments of her emotional states. She hopes her illustrations empower people who can see themselves in the art and that it gives them strength when they need it most. She enjoys creating powerful, diverse women in her artwork and representing her connection to culture.

## THEMES

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### First Nations History:

*Our Game* explores the long history that First Nations people have with AFL, from the similarities between Marngrook and AFL, to the incredible First Nations players who are such strong role models for young players. Reflect on what aspects of this story are new to you – are you surprised by anything you learn in the book? Discuss some of the ways that First Nations players are celebrated in the AFL, and some of the challenges they have to overcome to get there. How would you describe the 'spirit' of AFL? Does it always succeed in this?

### Confidence:

Even though Whitney has played football heaps of times before, when it comes to playing in a team, she's nervous. Discuss where these nerves come from, and why doing something in front of other people can make us lose confidence. Read the end of the book together and discuss the things that Aunty Dawn and Julian tell Whitney to help build her confidence. What have people done or said to you that has given you a confidence boost when you've felt nervous? What are some of the other ways you overcome nerves?

## WRITING STYLE

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Stories should be entertaining, but they can also help to teach us more about our communities and our history. In *Our Game*, even though Whitney and Julian are fictional characters, the history of Marngrook and First Nations players in AFL is true. Go through the book and discuss which parts are true and which are fictional. How can you tell the difference?



Discuss why writers might choose to use fiction as a way to explore real people and events. What are some of the strengths of this form? What might be some of the challenges? Does the book make you want to learn more?

## COMPREHENSION

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- How does Whitney feel on her first training day? Why?
- What is Marngrook? What parts of Marngrook can you see in modern footy?
- What are some of the differences between Marngrook and football?
- What did Whitney enjoy about her first day?
- Describe the way that Whitney and Jason feel when Aunty Dawn takes them to the MCG.
- Although she enjoys the training, when it comes to her first big game, Whitney is overcome by nerves. What does Aunty Dawn tell her to build her confidence?
- Which of the players in the book do you know? Which are new to you?
- What does the story say about winning? How important is it?

## WRITING EXERCISE

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Imagine that you're Whitney and you've just played your first big game. Write a diary entry that describes how you feel and what happened.

## ILLUSTRATION STYLE

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In her illustrations, Desirai Saunders captures the expressions of her characters in her realistic representations of Whitney and Julian. Explore Whitney's expressions throughout the story and discuss what they reveal about how she's feeling. How does the illustrator capture her emotions in the book? How can you show emotions in your own illustrations?

A faded curved line runs through the background of all of the images. What do you think this means? What does it look like? Discuss the line in relation to community and connection – why do you think the illustrator has included it in the story?

## CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

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- Choose one of the AFL heroes mentioned in the book and learn more about them. Come up with a creative way to share what you've learned (a poster, a presentation, a song!)
- Organise a friendly footy game for your school community. How can you encourage everyone to come along and be a part of the day. What are some of the ways that people can be involved? Afterwards, reflect on how it felt to come together as a community.
- Uncle Jas tells Whitney and Julian that Marngrook teams (like AFL teams!) were often named after totems like the Magpies and the Hawks. As a class, vote for a team name that best represents you. Now individually design team t-shirts that reflect something about your team – consider image, colour and shape.



- Who are your local sports heroes? How do they inspire you? Write a letter to a player you look up to, telling them why they're a role model to you.
- If you can, organise a class excursion to your local sporting ground. Discuss the different kinds of communities that come together on these grounds and the different ways they're used. How does it feel to be here? Does it feel like 'your' place? Why/why not?

## RELATED READING

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Read more about Marngrook here:

[https://www.sportaus.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/704866/marn\\_grook.pdf](https://www.sportaus.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/704866/marn_grook.pdf)

*Marngrook*

By Titta Secombe

*Kick with My Left Foot*

By Paul Seden

*Little Nic's Big Day*

By Nic Naitanui

*Kicking Goals with Goodesy and Magic*

By Anita Heiss, Michael O'Loughlin, and Adam Goodes

*Going to the Footy*

By Debbie Coombes and Greg Dreise

*Backyard Footy*

By Carl Merrison

*My Deadly Boots*

By Carl Merrison & Hakea Hustler

*AFL Little Legends (series)*

By Nicole Hayes and Adrian Beck

