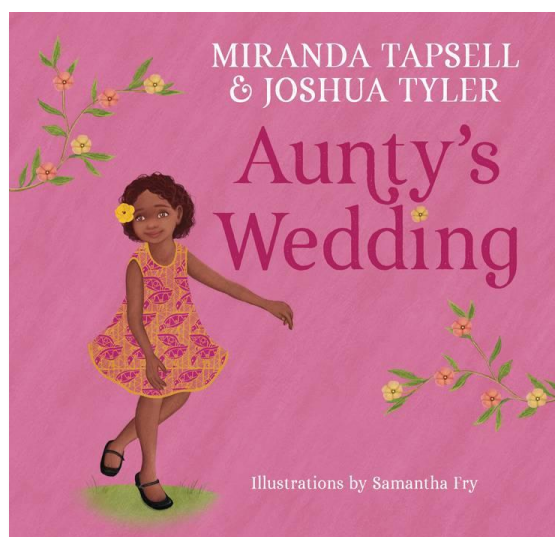


# Aunty's Wedding

MIRANDA TAPSELL  
& JOSHUA TYLER

Illustrations by Samantha Fry



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**Format: Hardback**  
**Recommended for 3-6-year-olds**

## Summary

*Everyone on the island is getting ready for Aunty's Wedding. Maningawu puts on her best hat and I can wear a wurrijinga in my hair. Lucky! We all dress up, but I still don't understand. Why do people have a wedding?*

A warm family story that celebrates love and culture from actor, activist, writer and Australian sweetheart, Miranda Tapsell, and Joshua Tyler, co-writer of *Top End Wedding*, lushly illustrated by Samantha Fry.

## Author style

*Aunty's Wedding* is a celebration of many things: the people, culture and language of the Tiwi Islands, the curiosity of children and their joy of discovery, and the rituals of marriage.

The story is seen through the eyes of a young girl as she prepares for her Aunty's wedding, while the girl is guided through the process by the wisdom of Maningawu, her grandmother.

There's no direct speech marks in the text; instead the font and position of the type (left page vs right page) help to orient the reader as to who is speaking. The simple text uses Tiwi language words in a context that makes their meaning clear, although there is also a glossary of pronunciation and translation into English language at the end of the book.

Vibrantly colourful illustrations by Samantha Fry incorporate the work of Tiwi artists into the clothing of the characters and provide an extra richness to the reading experience.



## Use in the curriculum

*Aunty's Wedding* is suitable for use in primary schools and would fit within Indigenous Studies learning units at this level. It also offers opportunities for exploring Languages Other Than English, Art, and Studies of Society and Environment.

## Themes

- marriage • family • Tiwi culture • Tiwi language • intergenerational relationships • community • reconciliation •

## Classroom discussion and application

### Before reading

Before opening *Aunty's Wedding*, look at the title and cover design. Ask the following questions to encourage students to think about some of the themes that will be in the book:

- Has anyone in the class been to a wedding?
- What happened at the wedding you went to?
- Does anyone know why people have weddings?
- Who do you think the little girl on the cover might be?
- Does she seem happy about going to her Aunty's wedding?
- Do you think this will be a happy or sad story?



Have you ever seen a design like the one on the little girl's dress? What do you think this design might mean? [Hint: the copyright page explains what these Tiwi designs mean.]

Use this last question as a starting point to show students some images of Tiwi art (available through Google Images) and talk about the Tiwi people living on islands north of Darwin. Show a map of Australia so young students can better understand where the story is set.

### Reflection After Reading

[Note to teachers and librarians: At the back of the book, there is a guide to pronunciation of the Tiwi words that appear in the story.]

Read the story through once, close the book and ask the class if they liked it, and why? Gently encourage students to think about more than just what happened in the story. Ask them about how the characters, the colours, the Tiwi designs and the flowers made them feel about the story. Ask them if they would like to go to Aunty's wedding, too? Encourage them to say why or why not.

### Tiwi Language Words

Engage very young students in a conversation about language by asking them if anyone in the group can speak a language other than English. If one or more students put their hand up and say 'yes' ask what the word 'flower' is in their other language? If no one answers 'yes', explain that in English we use the word 'flower' but in other languages they use different words such as 'huā' in Chinese or 'fleur' in French. Now open the book again and remind students that the story is set in the Tiwi Islands and that some words in it are different from those they may be familiar with because they are Tiwi language words.

Now turn to the first page with the words, 'What's in that box, Maningawu?' Before going any further, ask students if they can guess what the word 'Maningawu' means in English. [If they are struggling, point out that the woman pictured is the little girl's maningawu.] Ask the class to repeat the word in unison.

Keep reading until you come to the page with the word 'wurrijinga' and ask students to guess what this word means in English. [Point to the image of the flower while asking.] Ask the class to repeat the word in unison.

Now turn the page and read the sentence with the word 'Yuwuni' on it and ask students to guess who Yuwuni might be in the picture, and what his relationship to the little girl might be. [Point to the older boy in the picture while asking.] Ask the class to repeat the word.

Keep reading until you reach the page where the little girl and her grandmother are dancing. Ask what the class thinks the word 'yoyi' might mean in English. Ask the class to repeat the word.

Repeat this exercise on the page featuring the words 'japalingini' and 'pamijini' and point them out on the page. Ask what the class thinks the words mean in English. Ask the class to repeat the words.

### General discussion questions after reading

Turn to the page where the bride and groom are exchanging vows in front of their friends and family and ask students the following questions:

- What do we call a woman who is getting married? [She is the bride]
- What do we call a man who is getting married? [He is the groom]
- Who are the women who stand next to a bride? [Bridesmaids]
- And the men who stand with a groom? [Groomsmen]
- Where do you think the wedding in this book is taking place? [A church or special hall on the Tiwi Islands]
- Who are all the people sitting and watching the bride and groom in this book? [Friends and family]
- Turn the page and ask the class what Maningawu and the other old ladies are doing to celebrate after this Tiwi wedding ceremony?



## About the authors and illustrator



Miranda Tapsell was born in Darwin and her people are the Larrakia and the Tiwi. She grew up in Kakadu National Park and shot to fame after her role in the film *The Sapphires*. Miranda is also known for her work on the TV shows *Love Child*, *Cleverman* and *Wolf Creek*, among others. She co-wrote, produced and starred in the box office hit *Top End Wedding*.

Joshua Tyler grew up in the Barossa Valley, on Peramangk country. He is an award-winning screenwriter, playwright and actor. Joshua co-wrote *Top End Wedding* with Miranda Tapsell and has written for a number of children's TV shows including *Tashi* and *100% Wolf*. He currently lives on a hobby farm in rural Victoria with his wife, two kids and lots of native animals.

Samantha Fry grew up in the Northern Territory and lives in Darwin. She is descended from the Dagoman people from Katherine and as a child lived in remote communities across the Top End. Her first book, *Alfred's War*, written by Rachel Bin Salleh, was short-listed for the Premier's Literary Awards and the Speech Pathology Awards.

## A word from Joshua Tyler

'I was inspired to co-write *Aunty's Wedding* because during the process of writing and shooting the film *Top End Wedding* with Miranda Tapsell, I fell in love with the art, landscapes, fashion and people of the Tiwi Islands.

'While on a research trip with Miranda, the only place we could stay was the Catholic Convent. It not being a particularly comfortable place, we ended up hanging out at the Tiwi Design shop. Spending time with the artists and seeing their work was an inspiring and moving experience.'



– Joshua Tyler





## A word from the illustrator

'I draw from my childhood experiences and the people I've met throughout my life. The girl in *Aunty's Wedding* reminds me of my sister when she was little, who was cheeky and so cute! Maningawu is a character that came together based on characteristics from a few old ladies I've met who are young at heart, full of energy and love to dance.



'When I illustrate, the picture is usually in my mind first. The ideas swim around for a while and I think about how the character/s could look, what the scene could look like and how they fit together. Then my ideas come out very roughly – it basically looks like scribble – and I mould it with pencil (or digital pencil) by going over and over the scribble, perfecting it as I go. Once the ideas are there, it's easier and I tidy it all up. The artwork in *Aunty's Wedding* is digital illustration using Procreate and Adobe Photoshop. With their permission, I also used artwork from Tiwi Design for the girl's dress, Maningawu's shirt and the bride's dress.

'I really love illustrating stories written by Aboriginal people. As an Aboriginal person myself, I believe that if stories are relevant and relatable to someone, they are sometimes better understood and easier to learn. I grew up reading a lot of stories that were based in English settings and while I enjoyed them and acknowledge my English ancestry, I think it's also important to have a choice to read stories from all backgrounds. This helps us better understand our different cultures – and each other.'

– **Samantha Fry**

