

Teachers Notes

by Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright

Say Yes

Written by Jennifer Castles
Illustrated by Paul Seden

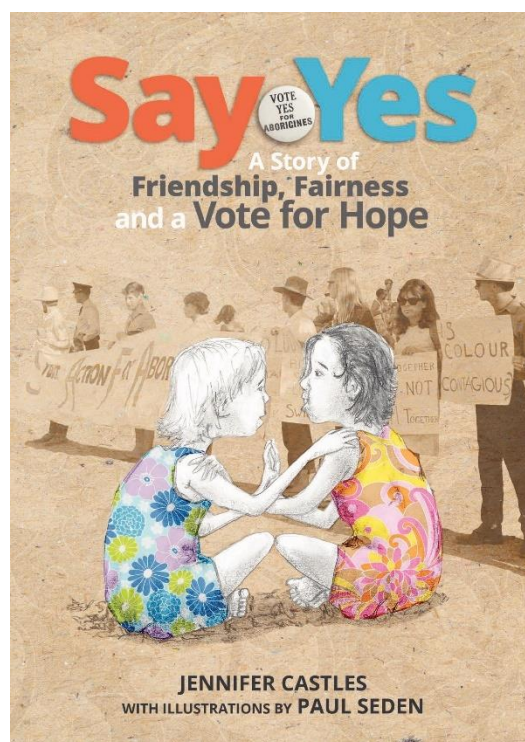
ISBN 9781760294670

Recommended for ages 7-12 yrs

Older students and adults will also appreciate this book.

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INTRODUCTION

'It's just not fair.'

Once there were two little girls who were best friends. They did everything together. As they got older they weren't allowed to do the same things anymore. Because they looked different. Because they were different – one was Indigenous and one was non-Indigenous. They weren't allowed to do the same things anymore – because of the law.

But they knew that their friendship bound them tighter than any law could break.

Say Yes is a story about the landmark 1967 Referendum, the two women who came together to change the law – Faith Bandler and Jessie Street – and how the Australian people said YES.

It's a book about fairness and friendship that can be enjoyed by children of all ages.

Told from the child's perspective, it helps to explain what this historic referendum meant to Australian society. It is about actual historical events and will help older children understand why the 1967 Australian Referendum (technically 'the Constitution Alteration (Aboriginals) 1967 Referendum') was so important and why it should be acknowledged and celebrated by all Australians.

Contrary to many modern sources, the 1967 Referendum did not give Indigenous Australians the vote: they already had it; it did not make them citizens of Australia: they already were; and it did not directly ensure they were counted in the national census. Nevertheless, the powerful campaign and the huge majority YES vote marked a turning point in Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations and created an enormous feeling of hope and what is today called 'reconciliation'.

Say Yes also invites reflection about contemporary attitudes and the current push for recognition in the Constitution. On its surface, this is a very simple text with some original illustrations by Indigenous Australian illustrator Paul Seden, but archival photographs enrich its content and will be the source of challenging stimulus to students.

This richly informative text also celebrates the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Aboriginal referendum (May 27 2017).

CURRICULUM AREAS

This book might be studied in lower and upper primary, and also lower secondary classrooms. It is relevant in two **curriculum areas: Studies of Society & Environment** (Themes, and Values) and **Arts** (Language and Literacy, Visual Literacy, Creative Arts). These areas are explored below, with numerous resources listed in the **Bibliography**.

SOSE (THEMES)

Within **SOSE**, it could be used to explore **Themes** such as:

Indigenous Australian Culture, Identity and History, Campaign for Rights

- An excerpt from the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act (p 9) clearly states limitations to Indigenous people's rights in Australia. Discuss the implications of the wording of this Act with students. What changes were brought about in 1967? How influential were those changes? What changes should still be implemented in Australia?
- The notes at the back of the book offer background to some of the situations depicted in this book, in which the prejudices enabled by local rules and laws were truly blatant. Imagine having to sit in a special part of a cinema, or not to be

allowed to swim at the public swimming pool, or to seek government permission to travel interstate to attend a relative's funeral? Do you still see evidence of such prejudices in your own communities?

- Research the part that Mrs Jessie Street, Mrs Faith Bandler and others such as Harriet Ellis played in the Australian Aboriginal Rights movement.
- The campaign for Indigenous Recognition in Australia's constitution is still in progress and unlikely to be resolved to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum. There are various opinions on this campaign, and some of Australia's First Peoples are opposed to the proposal. Teachers may wish to research this background too, and the progress of the campaign, in order to inform students of the key factors involved.
- 2017 is the fiftieth anniversary of the 1967 Referendum. Research some of the events taking place in Australia to celebrate this milestone.

Racism in the 1960s

- Encourage students to discuss the origins of racism. Sensitively invite students of various ethnicities to explore their feelings and experiences.
- How did the laws enable racism to flourish in the 1960s?
- Were attitudes very different in the 1960s to now? What evidence do you base this on? Are there examples of racism in our society or in the policies of those in positions of power?
- One of the tenets of racism is often segregation. What examples of such policies were evinced in this text?
- Make a list of words which relate to racism. e.g. segregation, apartheid, bigotry, xenophobia etc. Then invite students to find examples of such policies in Australia's history or in that of another country.

Elections and Voting

- Investigate how the voting system works. Are all those who live in Australia eligible to vote?
- It is shocking to realise that Aboriginal Australians were not allowed to vote; and yet were allowed to fight in wars; to work in many occupations; and had been the original inhabitants of Australia. Have any other cultural groups been discriminated against like this?
- Research referendums in Australian political history and which votes have been carried or not carried.

Friendship

- These two friends form a bond which challenges prejudices. How easy/difficult is it for a friend to resist peer group pressure to conform to community standards and prejudices?
- Empathy is derived from being able to put oneself into someone else's shoes. The narrator is so close to Mandy that she feels her pain; she feels her exclusion in white society. Discuss.
- Despite their friendship as children, the laws which remained may still have limited their further interaction as adults. Discuss.

Justice/Fairness

- 'It's just not fair.' is a repeated line in this text. What constitutes fairness and justice? Do people always view fairness in the same way? Think, for example, of

the differences of opinion between different political parties or different cultures or religions.

- What mechanisms does society use to determine justice? Invite students to make a list of such mechanisms beginning with courts of law, mediation, etc.
- Which people are designated as being responsible for enforcing laws? eg judges, lawyers, police etc.
- What rights should all citizens share or have access to?

SOSE (VALUES)

This work also explores **Values**.

According to: 'Teaching Values Education: An Intrinsic Case Study' Stephen Connolly & Sorrel Penn-Edwards *Griffith University, Centre for Applied Language, Literacy & Communication Studies*

<<http://www98.griffith.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/handle/10072/2496/31028.pdf?sequence=1>>

key values to be studied in the curriculum include:

- (a) Care and compassion: Care for self and others.
- (b) Doing your best: Seek to accomplish something worthy and admirable, try hard, pursue excellence.
- (c) Fair go: Pursue and protect the common good where all people are treated fairly for a just society.
- (d) Freedom: Enjoy all the rights and privileges of Australian citizenship free from unnecessary interference or control, and stand up for the rights of others.
- (e) Honesty and trustworthiness: Be honest, sincere and seek the truth.
- (f) Integrity: Act in accordance with principles of moral and ethical conduct, ensure consistency between words and deeds.
- (g) Respect: Treat others with consideration and regard, respect another person's point of view.
- (h) Responsibility: Be accountable for one's own actions, resolve differences in constructive, non-violent and peaceful ways, contribute to society and to civic life, take care of the environment.
- (i) Understanding, tolerance and inclusion: Be aware of others and their cultures, accept diversity within a democratic society, being included and including others.

The title page contains the sub-title: '*A Story of Friendship, Fairness and a Vote for Hope*'. How does *Say Yes* explore these values, or any of those listed above?

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

- The story employs the first **person narrative voice** of Mandy's friend who is not named. How does the first person narration convey meaning? How might this have worked if Mandy had told the story? Why do you think Jennifer Castles chose to have the non-Indigenous character tell the story?
- The book employs **literary devices**. e.g. 'On a hot-hot-hot day, the sun smacks us on the head and the footpath burns like a frypan.' (p. 3) Discuss the use of literary device in this quotation, and in any other section in this text.
- **Read Aboriginal Australian poet and activist, Oodgeroo Noonuccal's memoir *Stradbroke Dreamtime* illustrated (1993) by Bronwyn Bancroft.** Listen

to this interview with Oodgeroo Noonuccal: 'Oodgeroo Noonuccal' Directed by Don Featherstone *YouTube* uploaded on April 25, 2010
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oF5PxEnkgiI>>

- **Read other stories in picture book form about Aboriginal Australians' lives and/or their fight for independence and recognition.** e.g. Bronwyn Bancroft's *Remembering Lionsville* (2013); Ian Abdulla's *As I Grew Older* (1993); Elaine Russell's *A is for Aunty* (2000); Oodgeroo's *Stradbroke Dreamtime* (1993); *Maybe Tomorrow* by Boori Monty Pryor and Meme McDonald (2010); *Yumba Days* by Herb Wharton (1999); *Boomerang and Bat* by Mark Greenwood and Terry Denton (2016). Reading such stories develops empathy for other people. Discuss and compare these and other texts, and invite students to share the insights they glean from them.
- **Write a poem** expressing some of the ideas in this text. Students may wish to read: Oodgeroo Noonuccal's 'We are Going'
<http://famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/oodgeroo_noonuccal/poems/4601> as an example of an emotional plea for Aboriginal Australian people.
- Invite students to **write a letter** to a politician outlining why Mandy's treatment is wrong, as if the letter has been written by her friend, the narrator of this text. [See also **BM 2**.]
- **Investigate the work that Australian Aboriginal writers and illustrators** have done to publicly address the concerns of their people. Research the lives of and works by, for example, Oodgeroo Noonuccal (1920–1993), Lionel Fogarty (1958–), Jack Davis (1917–2000), Anita Heiss (1968–), Sally Morgan (1951–), Bronwyn Bancroft (1958), Bruce Pascoe (1947–), Kevin Gilbert (1933–1993), Sam Watson (1952–), Sam Wagan Watson (1972–) and Herb Wharton, (1936–).
- Test your students' **comprehension** after reading the story by asking simple questions.

VISUAL LITERACY

- Discuss the **layout and design** of the book, and of the individual double page spreads within it. The format varies from page to page. This text employs scanned images from historical documents juxtaposed with drawings by the artist. How does this affect the reading of the book?
- The artist's images are executed in **pen and ink drawings in watercolour**. Archival photographs are also used in several frames. Discuss these techniques and the artist's and designer's choice of mediums with your students and then encourage them to create pictures in the same style, in response to this text.
- How does Paul Seden **convey emotions** in his images? Discuss the **use of perspective, spatial relationship and body language** in this visual text.
- Examine the **front and back cover images**. Examine the juxtaposition of the two friends on the cover with the photo behind them. Read, too, the text on the back cover, and discuss with reference to the topics raised in **SOSE (Themes)** above.
- **The Endpapers** depict a retro floral pattern typical of the 'psychedelic' sixties; it is bright and beautifully designed; the two girls wear floral dresses and one is decorated with the pattern on the endpapers. Discuss the meaning conveyed here.
- Create a **graphic novel version** of one of the incidents in this book. [See **BM 3** for template.] For suitable templates, consult webpages such as 'Comic Strip Layouts' <<http://donnayoung.org/art/comics.htm>>

CREATIVE ARTS

This story might be used to encourage students to create their own version of the story in a range of styles, formats, and mediums, and in a range of other creative arts such as acting, improvisation, music and dance.

- **Listen** to 'From Little Things Big Things Grow' by Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody. Research its origins.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/From_Little_Things_Big_Things_Grow>
Read the book based on this song. Discuss its meaning.
- Have the class **create a mural** on a wall in your classroom; invite students to create different panels telling this story of the 1967 Referendum. The mural might be painted on butchers' paper and then displayed.
- Invite students to **create a slogan and a poster** calling for election changes in 1967. [See also **BM1**.]

CONCLUSION

The publisher suggests that: 'This book will provide an excellent catalyst for discussion at primary and secondary level: focuses on positive historical events and inspirational people; reflects on past injustices; provides hope for the future.'

It offers a fascinating insight into a significant event in Australia's social and political history, and is a powerful statement against racism viewed through the prism of a personal friendship.

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INTERNET RESOURCES

INTERNET RESOURCES – AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL HISTORY & CULTURE

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<<http://treatypublic.net/content/1967-referendum-important-facts-and-interesting-pieces-information>>

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INTERNET RESOURCES – OTHER TOPICS

'Teaching Values Education: An Intrinsic Case Study' Stephen Connolly & Sorrel Penn-Edwards
Griffith University, Centre for Applied Language, Literacy & Communication Studies
<<http://www98.griffith.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/handle/10072/2496/31028.pdf?sequence=1>>

ABOUT THE WRITERS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jennifer Castles grew up in Adelaide and worked for years as an actor, mostly on the stage. She then switched careers to publishing and wrote a history book about a bushranger named Ned, and three picture books about a dog named Tiny, a penguin named Jojo and a roofbird named Lorkie. She lives in Melbourne with her family and a cat named Spartacus.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Paul Seden is an Indigenous Australian author, artist and illustrator. Paul is a self-confessed art and story tragic with a passion for sport and the outdoors. His background working with Indigenous Australian kids in the schools of Darwin and remote communities in the Northern Territory were the inspiration for his first picture book *Kick with my Left Foot* (illustrated by Karen Briggs, published by Allen & Unwin). His latest book, which he has both written and illustrated, is *Crabbing with Dad*, published by Magabala Books.

Visit Paul Seden's Facebook page <<https://www.facebook.com/paulseden/>> for more information about his books and artwork.

See: Todd, Courtney 'A Kick out of Writing' *Sunday Life* June 8 2014
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THESE NOTES

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright operates *justified text* writing and publishing consultancy services, has published widely on children's and YA literature, and in 2011 was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland, in 2012 the CBCA (National) Nan Chauncy Award for Outstanding Services to Children's Literature in Australia, and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award.

BLACKLINE MASTER 1: COLLAGE POSTER

Create a poster. Cut out the words:

'Right Wrongs Write Yes for Aborigines'

and paste them onto an A3 piece of paper. Then employ collage techniques to decorate it, using some of the images below, in repeated patterns:



GROUP EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Using pages 5, 20 and 21 to see examples of placards, leaflets badges and banners, create a set of campaign materials for the 1967 referendum OR for a cause you feel strongly about. Prepare a one-minute speech to convince your classmates of your cause.

BLACKLINE MASTER 2: STORY STARTER

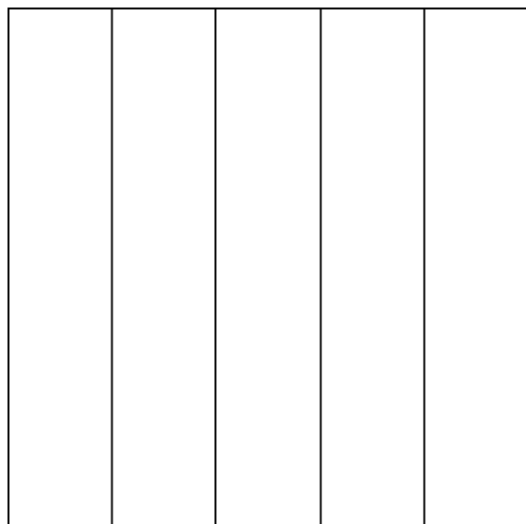
Write a contemporary short story using these images as inspiration.



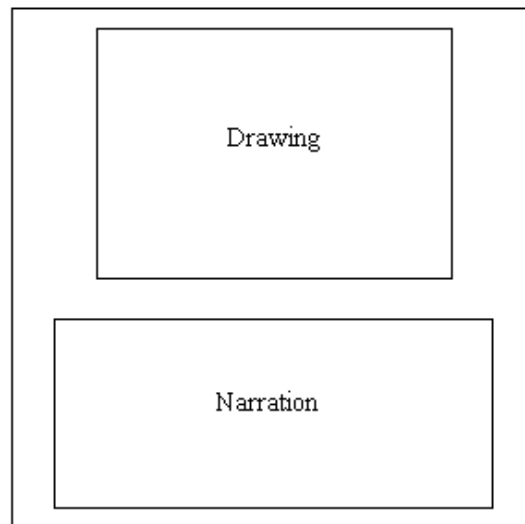
A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing a contemporary short story inspired by the images above.

BLACKLINE MASTER 3: MAKE YOUR OWN COMIC PANEL

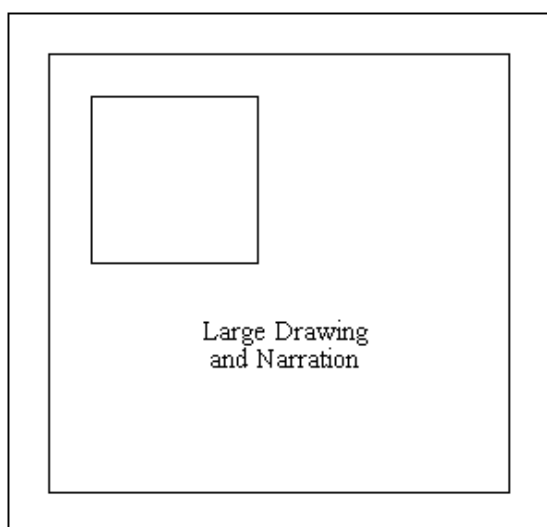
Design a comic strip based on an incident in this book. Enlarge to A3 to give students more space.



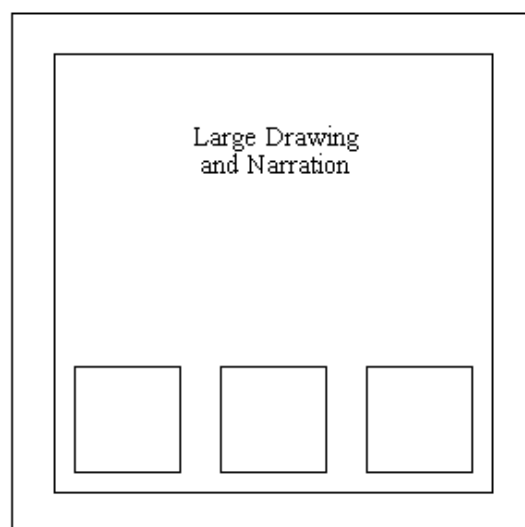
Contiguous Panel



Text-heavy Panel



Insert Panel



Meta-Panel

Layout taken from article: **Gregory Bryan, Brigham Young University**
George W. Chilcoat, Brigham Young University **Timothy G. Morrison, Brigham Young University** 'Pow! Zap! Wham! Creating Comic Books from Picture Books in Social Studies Classrooms' *Canadian Social Studies* Volume 37, Number 1, Fall 2002 Available: <http://www2.education.ualberta.ca/css/css_37_1/ftcomics_in_social_studies.htm>