

TEACHERS' NOTES

TIWI IN PARIS

Written and illustrated by Glen Farmer Illortaminni

Teachers' notes prepared by Cara Shipp

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN AN ARTIST FROM THE REMOTE TIWI ISLANDS
GETS LOST IN ONE OF THE WORLD'S BIGGEST CITIES?

T I W I

The letters 'T', 'I', 'W', and 'I' are rendered in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The two 'I's are stylized to resemble traditional Tiwi basketry, with a vertical stem and two horizontal sections of woven mesh.

I N P A R I S

The letters 'I', 'N', 'P', 'A', 'R', 'I', and 'S' are rendered in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The 'A' is replaced by a white line-art illustration of the Eiffel Tower. The 'I' at the end of 'PARIS' has a white seagull perched on top of it.

Thames & Hudson Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work. For our head office in Naarm (Melbourne), we respectfully acknowledge the people of the Kulin Nations. We recognise the continuing connection to culture and story passed down through generations of Indigenous Australians that unite people, environment and ways of seeing. We pay respects to elders past and present, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waterways and community. Sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Synopsis

What happens when an artist from the remote Tiwi Islands gets lost in one of the world's biggest cities?

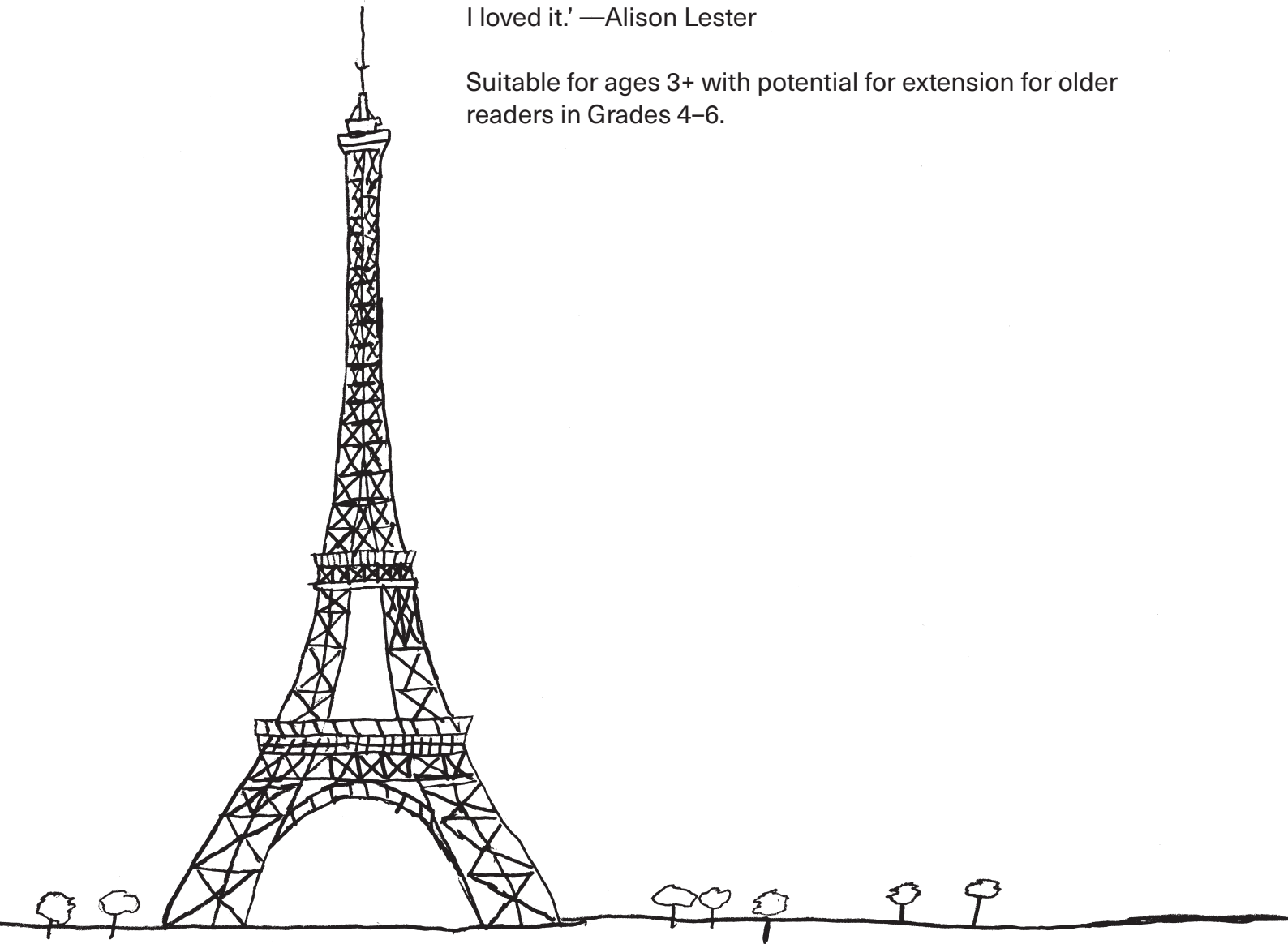
My name is Glen Farmer Illortaminni and I'm telling my story. Once I went to Paris as an interpreter for the old fella, the famous artist named Timothy Cook. It was October . . .

When Glen travels from his remote Tiwi Island home all the way to Paris, his trip takes an unexpected turn when he gets lost on his first night there.

What follows is an epic journey through famous French landmarks and into the homes of kind strangers, telling an incredible story of resilience, humour and home.

'A glorious collision of cultures. Glen's story is like no other. I loved it.' —Alison Lester

Suitable for ages 3+ with potential for extension for older readers in Grades 4–6.



Themes



TIWI ISLANDER CULTURE, ART
AND STORYTELLING

INTERNATIONAL ART CULTURE



TRAVELLING AND LEARNING NEW
LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

HOME



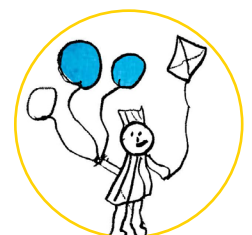
KINDNESS OF STRANGERS

FAMILY



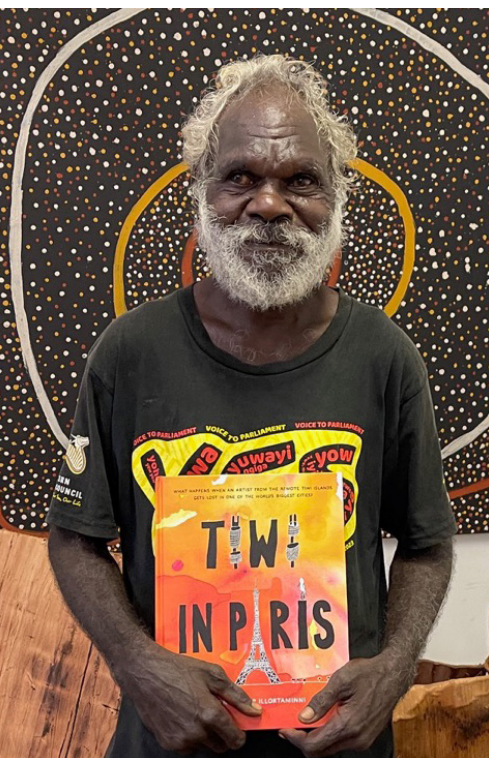
RESILIENCE

HUMOUR



Writing style

This is based on a true story and told in first person, past tense by the author, recounting his experience of travelling to Paris and getting lost. He shares his story in a calm and matter-of-fact way, and tells about the interesting experiences and conversations he had with strangers, police and other community services along the way. The illustrations use a soft, water-colour style with some pages using darker colours to signify night time or a time when the author felt sad, worried or scared. People are drawn in black ink using strong, simple lines, which contrast against the colours. Sometimes the people drawn are small figures, against a backdrop of large city buildings and structures. Other times the people are the focus and the kindness and generosity of strangers who help him along the way is emphasised.



Author & illustrator notes

Glen Farmer Illortaminni was born between the mango and mulana trees where the last old house was standing at Milikapiti, Melville Island. He joined Jilamara Arts & Crafts Association in 1994 where he worked for many years as an artist and arts worker. Glen's work has been exhibited across Australia, including in the National Gallery of Victoria and the National Gallery of Australia. Glen also worked at the Muluwurri Museum, a keeping place for Tiwi culture and an important place for remembering the old ways and the Old People.

Today, Glen works for Tiwi Enterprises at Milikapiti farm where he helps grow fruit and vegetables, including pineapples, sweet potato and limes, as well as caring for chickens, ducks and friendly water buffaloes. He enjoys travelling, the footy (Go, Tuyu Buffaloes!) and telling stories. Glen likes to go hunting and fishing, and spending time on Country.



Study notes

BEFORE READING

Explain to the class that you are going to be reading a story about two important artists from a small island community, who travel to Paris for an exhibition. It is based on a true story from the Tiwi Islands.

Spend some time learning about the Tiwi Islands, the artists and Paris. In order to complete these activities, select from the resources provided overleaf about the author, the artist Timothy Cook, Tiwi art and the Tiwi Islands.

- Look at the front and back cover, the inside cover introduction about Tiwi Islands, and the blurb. Make predictions about the story. Discuss the art work and use of black and white and colour. Ask the children to share if they have ever experienced being lost and separated from their families? How did they overcome that challenge?
- Introduce students to the author. Locate the Tiwi Islands on the [AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia](#) and on the Tourism and Transport Map at the bottom of the Tiwi Island Land Council page, [Visiting the Tiwi Islands](#). Locate Tiwi's close neighbours, Darwin, Larrakia Country. Learn from the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation website: [The Larrakia People](#).
- Discuss the location of the Tiwi Islands in relation to your school and identify/confirm your school's local First Nations Country.
- Discuss what might be similar or different between the Tiwi Islands and your local area: size, population, climate, animals, landscape and lifestyle.
- Discuss and locate Paris, France on a map. Discuss how far Paris is from Tiwi Islands (the book says Paris is more than 13,000 kilometres from home). As an interesting comparison, '[The Big Lap](#)' driving route around Australian mainland on Highway 1, the world's longest national highway, is about 14,750 kilometres.



- Learn about Paris: culture, food, landmarks, population, climate. Mention the Seine river and the metro transport, discussing if you have anything similar in your local area. Compare French culture and lifestyle with your local context and the Tiwi Islands. For a useful video summary of France by Professor Propellor's Planet, see: [France for Kids](#) - Fun facts on the French travel guide for kids.
- Look at the glossary at the back of the book. Practice using the words and discuss. For further support, the [Gambay language map](#) has collected some audio recordings about elements of Tiwi language, including a Little Yarns podcast episode about Tiwi seasons. The [Tiwi Land Council](#) also has extensive links to language resources and an online dictionary.

Learn about Tiwi art and about the famous artist Timothy Cook, the author's uncle, with whom he travelled to Paris, using the resources provided below. Consider how the book cover represents Glen's art, Timothy's art and Tiwi culture.

Glen Farmer Illortaminni

A feature of Glen's art is sculptural pieces, often of birds. He began with wood carvings in traditional Tiwi art style, and has since begun to experiment with metal sculpture, replicating Tiwi style in a contemporary medium.

[Glen Farmer Illortaminni \(Tiwi people\) 'Jongijongini \(egret\)' 2005–2006 - National Gallery of Australia](#)

[Glen Farmer Illortaminni – Jilamara Arts and Crafts Association](#)

Timothy Cook

A feature of Timothy's artwork is his dedication to the traditional art styles his elders taught him. He paints with ochre and is also experimenting with charcoal, a medium traditionally used by his ancestors. His art is personal to him and depicts important ceremonies, such as the Kulama, the yam harvest and initiation ceremony for boys to enter manhood. He uses dots (pwanga) to make the connection to the dots painted on the face in ceremony.

[Timothy Cook | Jilamara Arts and Crafts Association](#)

Tiwi art

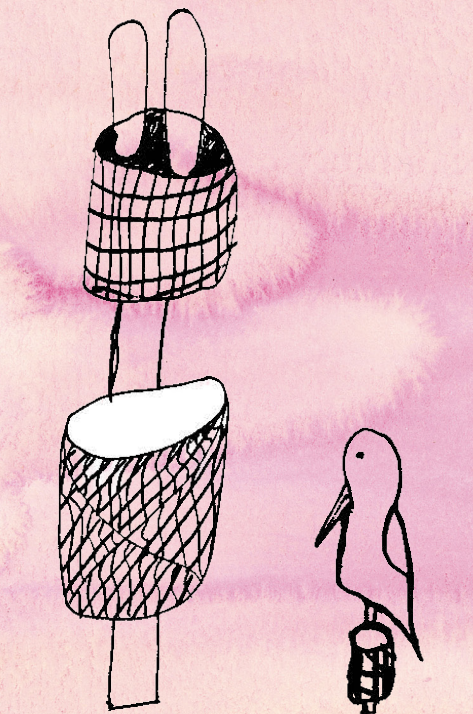
Tiwi art uses natural ochres from their Country in the colours red, yellow, white and black. The name of the Tiwi arts centre, Jilamara, refers to the design of ceremonial markings that feature in many Tiwi art works: 'From body it moved onto bark and then canvas, silk, printing, and now we are moving into digital. Culture is evolving with time.' –Colin Heenan-Puruntatameri, 2019. From the Jilamara website: <https://jilamara.com/about/>

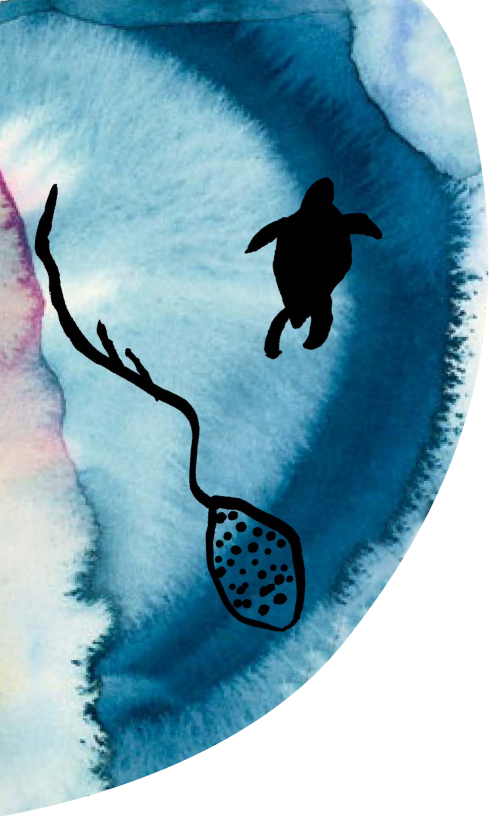
Learn more about Tiwi art styles on their Land Council website: <https://www.tiwilandcouncil.com/251/art>

The distinctive [tutini or Pukumani poles](#) are associated with very important funeral ceremonies to celebrate the life of the deceased.

For teacher reference, a story about art practice, cultural sensitivity and the sacredness of some Tiwi art, in which Glen is quoted, is provided below. It reminds us that it is not appropriate to copy Indigenous art styles in classroom activities, and instead, children should create their own original responses to the text, making up their own styles and symbols: [Sculptures resembling Tiwi burial poles deemed 'cultural appropriation' and destroyed](#)

For further information about Indigenous art in the classroom, see the Art Gallery of SA's online resource: [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art](#)





Tiwi Islands

The Tiwi Land Council website has a lot of information about the Tiwi Islands, their people, their cultures and history, their facilities, services and schools. There is also a Tiwi Enterprises page with contact details for businesses, including the Milikapiti farm:

<https://www.tiwilandcouncil.com/206/tiwi-enterprises>

<https://tiwienterprises.com/services/>

ABC Gardening Australia produced an island series (2013, Series 24), with four of the five episodes focusing on aspects of Tiwi Island people and culture. Episode 17 of the series focuses on the Milikapiti farm:

[Farming for the Islands – Gardening Australia](#)

Jilimara Arts & Craft Association, established in 1989, is owned and governed by artists from the community of Milikapiti on the Tiwi Islands. Through workshops, training and representation Jilamara members are supported to build careers as internationally renowned artists. In the community it is an important place for many generations of Tiwi people to build bright futures:

<https://jilamara.com/>

<https://jilamara.com/muluwurri-museum/>

Other Media:

Desert Pea Media spent six weeks on the Tiwi Islands in 2017 and produced six short films/music videos. One is linked as a Youtube clip below. Another, called 'Jules's Yarn', can be found on the [Desert Pea Media Facebook](#) page and is an engaging clip where a primary aged boy introduces the audience to his family and the island:

[Mamanta Crew - 'Paakatringa Waya'](#)

ABC News has a segment about AFL on Tiwi Islands and the important place it holds in the culture:

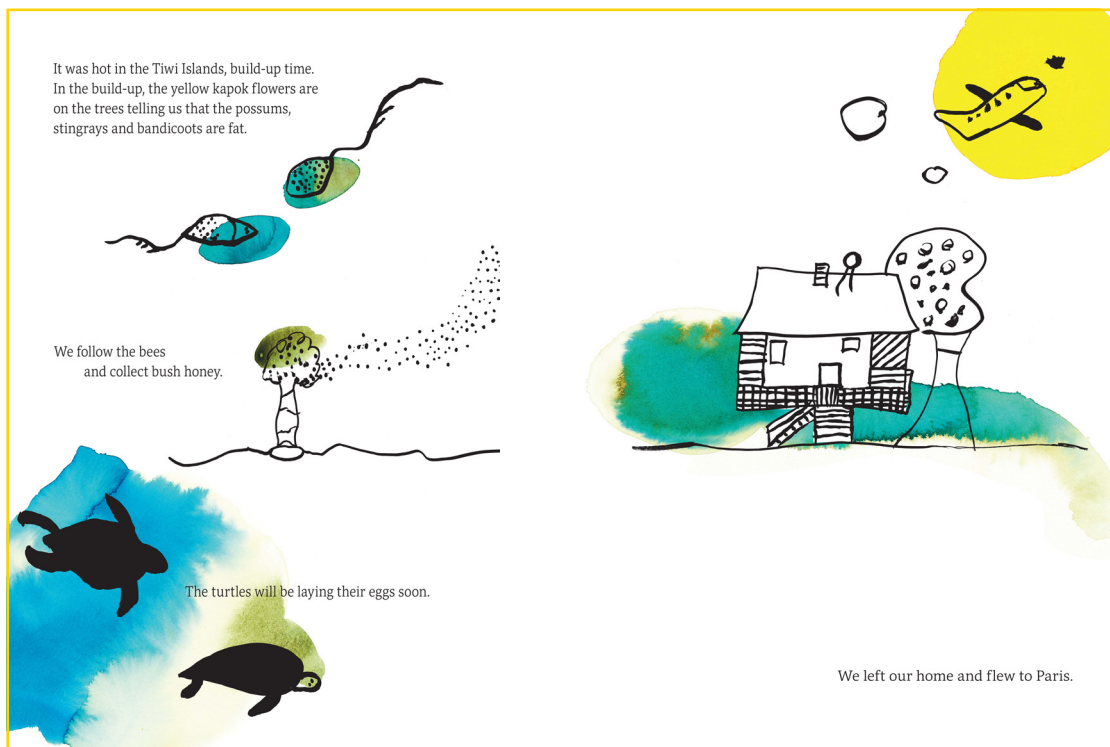
['Footy is a big religion' - Tiwi Islands grand final attracts thousands | ABC News](#)

ABC Education: Behind the News has an article and discussion questions about the role of Tiwi music and dance in maintaining and teaching culture:

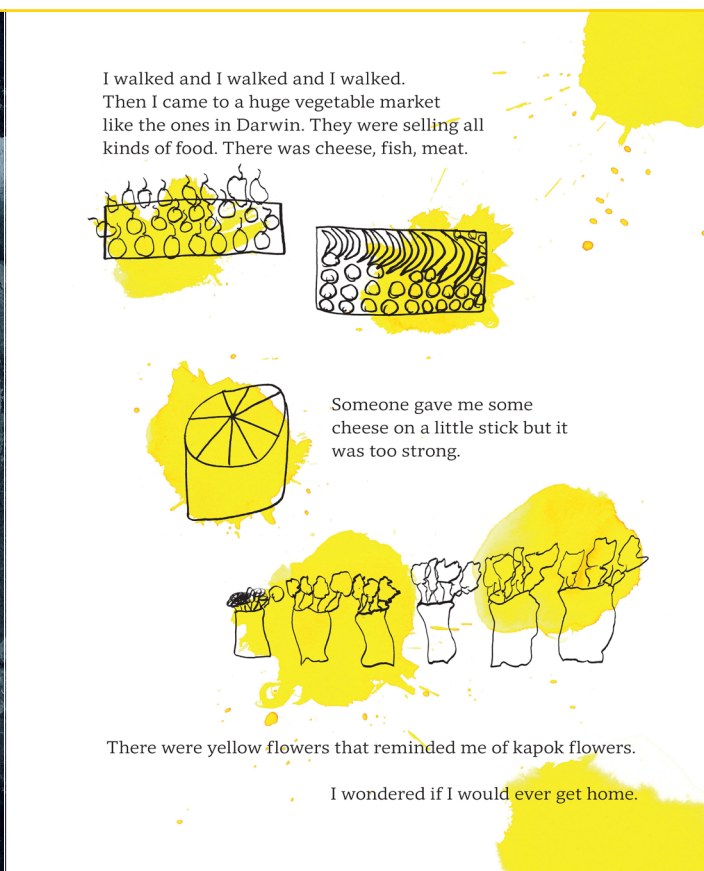
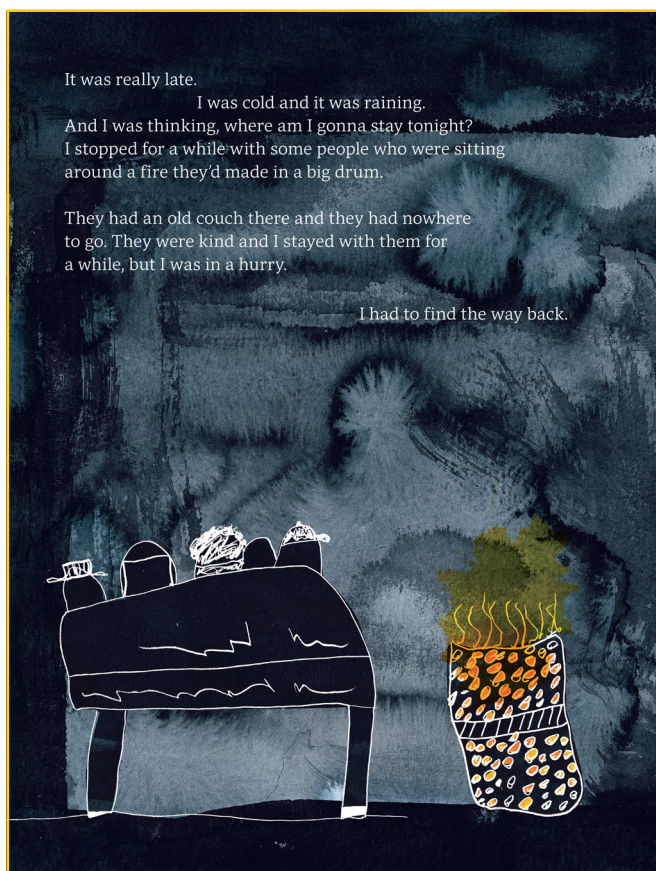
[BTN: Tiwi music: Keeping an ancient culture alive - ABC Education](#)

DURING READING

- Look at the pages below and discuss the information about Tiwi Islands in October. Contrast this with the next page when Glen arrives in Paris. Ask the children what they notice about the colours, the light, the presence of natural things and the presence of man-made things?



- Discuss the quote: 'I spoke English. They spoke French. Nobody spoke Tiwi.' Have the children consider how it feels when people can't understand what each other is saying. Have they been in this situation? Imagine how Glen would be feeling. What could people do if they are ever in this situation?
- Look at the pages below and notice the contrast in light and dark, perhaps showing the passing of night into morning. Notice how the yellow, a happy colour, helps us understand how Glen might feel when he sees things that remind him of home: the market and the yellow flowers. Discuss with the children how they would feel if they were in a foreign place and then saw sights that reminded them of home. Have they ever had that experience? Think about how although you may go to a foreign place where people eat and speak differently, there are always things that you can find in common (sitting by a fire, food markets, similar plants and flowers). Make a list of these differences and similarities.



- Discuss the pages below where Glen follows a tour group. Where might the tourists be from? Glen takes history seriously and doesn't laugh, like when he was a guide and cultural liaison officer at home. Briefly explain how Glen is making a connection in their histories – France was once invaded by Germans, and the Dutch once tried to invade the Tiwi Islands. Discuss how these times in history are usually sad times and ask the children to think about why (for example, fighting, having your way of life changed, losing freedom).

A tour guide walked past with a group of tourists and he was speaking in English. He was talking about olden times when the German army was trying to take over Paris because Hitler was the ruler. I decided to walk along behind them. I heard about that for a long time.

That guide was talking, but he was looking at me too, and laughing. But I didn't laugh. When I work at the art centre, I'm the cultural liaison, so I knew not to laugh. That's a serious story.

At the end of the tour I told him about being a guide back home. Then I told him, 'The Dutch came over to my Country, but my people fought them off.'

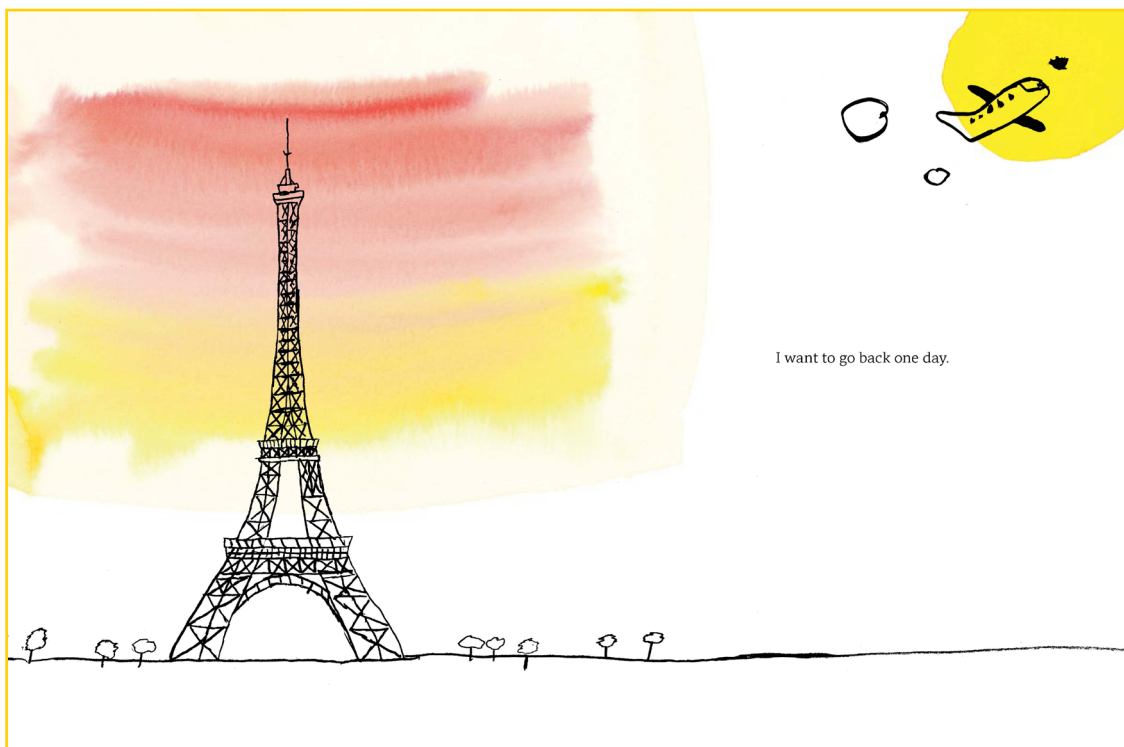
But when I told him I was lost in Paris, he didn't believe me.



- Think about the kindness of strangers in this story: the man and daughter who give him coffee, a ham and cheese baguette and call the ambulance; the Moroccan woman who fed him and gave him a bed for the night. Ask the children, would they help a lost person they found in the street? Why or why not? What could they do if they couldn't help personally (or didn't feel safe) but still wanted to do something kind for that person? List all the things students and make a poster to display in the classroom.



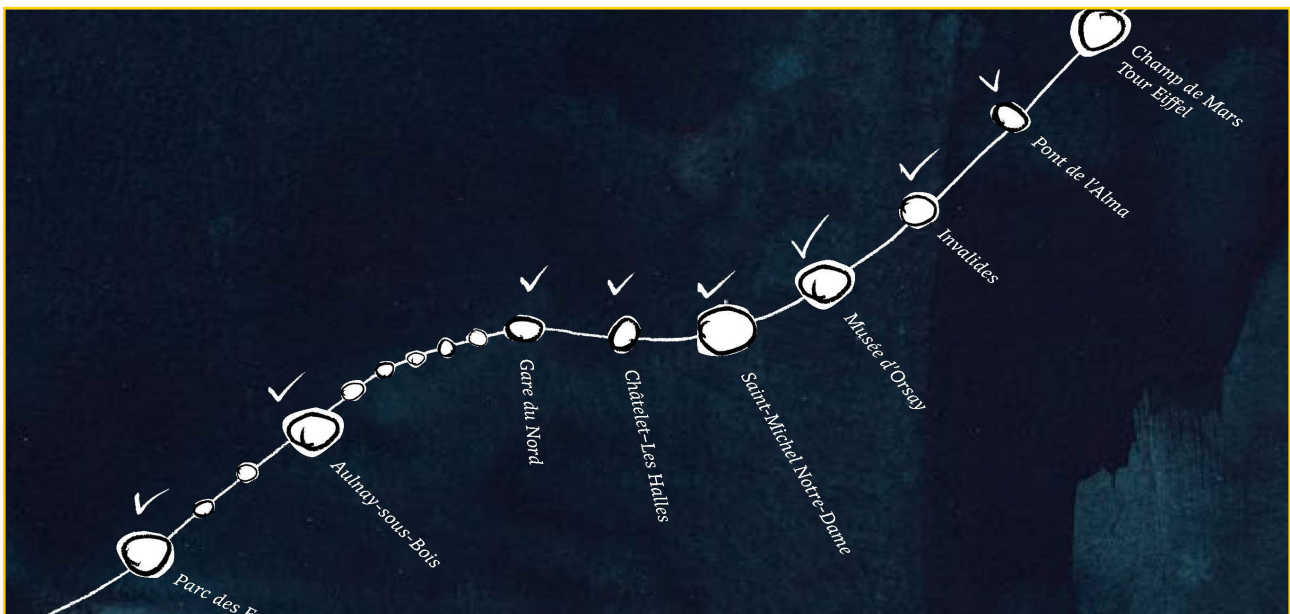
- Look at the images of Paris on the final pages, page 19 and 20. Ask children, what imagery jumps out at them, what do they notice, would they like to go to Paris? Has anyone been to Paris? Discuss how positive the author is, even though he has had a stressful time there. He still thinks it is beautiful and would like to go back. Notice and discuss his calmness, resilience, determination and how he finds positives in every situation.

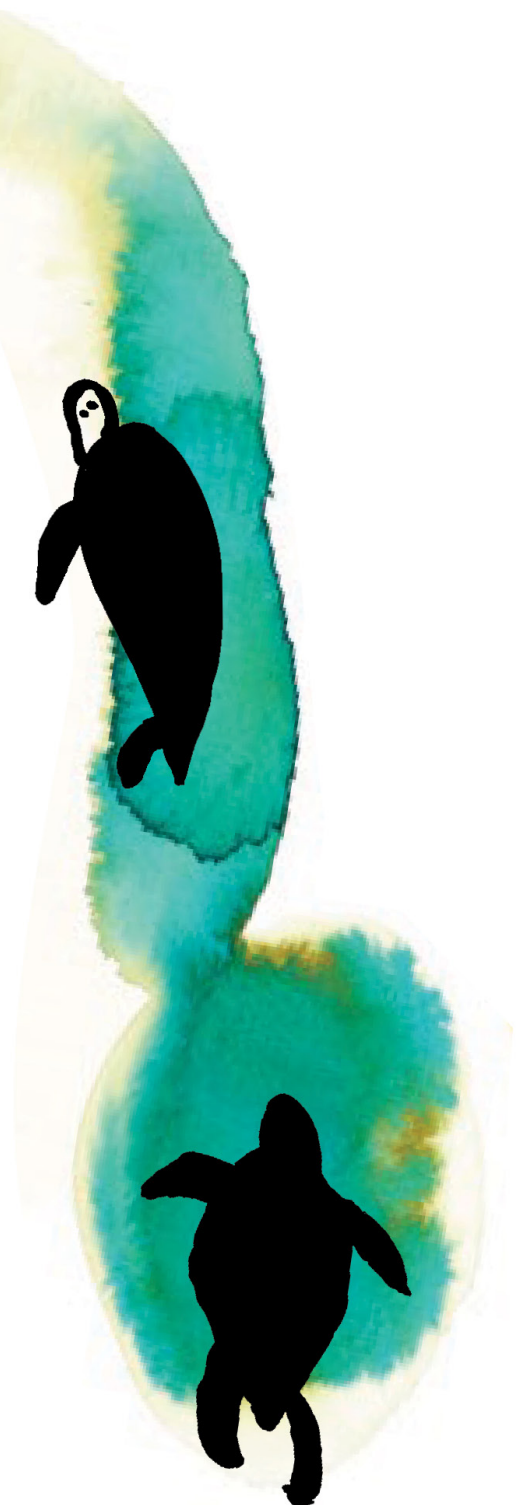


AFTER READING

- Glen and Timothy would have travelled about 25 hours by aeroplane from Darwin to Paris. Ask children what is the longest trip they have ever been on? By car, boat, plane or other mode? Have children imagine how they would feel if they were in another country 25 hours away from home. Have them draw or make a collage of images depicting all the people, places, foods, plants, animals and things they would miss from home.
- Re-cap and create a timeline of Glen's travels through Paris:
 - taking the metro and going to sleep at the airport;
 - finding a group of people with a couch and a fire;
 - finding a vegetable market;
 - following a tour guide around;
 - slipping over and being saved by a family, going to hospital;
 - going to a church to pray and rest;
 - meeting a nice stranger who fed him and gave him a bed for the night;
 - going back to the airport and being directed to the Australian embassy;
 - going to the embassy, where he was reunited with his uncle.

Allow children to illustrate their timeline in their own style. Discuss the feelings Glen may have had in each part of the timeline. Ask children to identify how they would feel in those situations.





- Consider how Aboriginal art is diverse and always evolving - compare Glen's illustrations of the book *Tiwi in Paris* to some of [Timothy Cook's famous artworks](#) and notice the similarities and differences. Not all First Nations artists are the same, and they do not always make the traditional art taught by their elders. That's what is great about art: individual expression. Art can be spiritual, it can give a powerful message, or it can just be fun and beautiful. Invite students to create their own art work in response to the book. It can be:
 - Their favourite part of the book
 - An important message of the book
 - Something new they have learned
 - Something from the book that they would like to draw differently/change its appearance

This activity could also be complemented by a trip to a local art gallery and/or activity with a local artist (and a local First Nations artist would be great if the opportunity exists).

- Explore the Tiwi seasons, animals and plants using the seasonal calendar. When Glen and Timothy went to Paris, it was hot in the Tiwi Islands, build-up time before storm season. This time is also called 'Tiyari'. It is a time when the yellow kapok flowers and there are plenty of possums stingrays and bandicoots. Extension: arrange an excursion or incursion to talk to your local Indigenous Ranger group, Aboriginal Land Council, Library, Environment centre, or First Nations cultural centre and ask if there is similar First Nations knowledge about the local seasons in your area. Teachers could assist children to undertake further research on local animals or plants.
 - [Tiwi Seasons](#)
 - [Tiwi seasons and plants and animals calendars - CSIRO](#)
- Ask children to interview their family members about a special holiday or event they have all attended together. Where did they travel? What was the reason they travelled there? What are their favourite memories? Collect photos if available. At school, create a photo journal of the holiday or event, and/or write a recount.

- Make contact with the Tiwi Land Council, Jilamara Arts, or a local Tiwi school. Set up a zoom class meeting to exchange greetings and information about the different places you live. Set up a penpal/email interview exchange. Create postcards with art depicting your local place, its plants and animals and natural and man-made attractions.
- Create a class video showing gratitude for the stories and culture shared by the Tiwi and sharing what students have learned by studying this book. With appropriate permissions from your families and school administration, this video might be nice to share with the Tiwi Land Council, Jilamara Arts or a Tiwi school.



Older students:

- Glen feels a wind stir at the church, remembers his middle name Gabriel (after the angel) and feels his Countrymen beside him willing him to return home. Discuss how both his faith and his connection to Country helps him in his quest. Note: the Tiwi islanders follow both traditional Tiwi faith expressed through the Dreaming and Catholicism, after a long history with missionary activity on the island. Teacher reference material to support:
 - [Connection to Animals and Country | Common Ground](#), article by Rona Glynn-McDonald, 2020.
 - [The Dreaming | Common Ground](#), 2019.
 - [My Island Church - ABC Religion & Ethics](#), story by Geraldine Doogue, 2014. (Transcript only, video not available)
 - [Tiwi Christianity](#): Aboriginal histories, Catholic mission and a surprising conversion - ABC Religion & Ethics, 2019.
- Discuss the role of Australian embassies in other countries, and the Commonwealth [coat of arms](#), which features the emu and the kangaroo. Are there any embassies in your local area? Which countries/citizens do they serve?
- Have children identify another overseas country they would like to visit and research that place. Identify its location on a map, its flag, historical monuments, natural attractions, food, culture and lifestyle. Create a poster or travel brochure showing why it would be a good location to visit.

