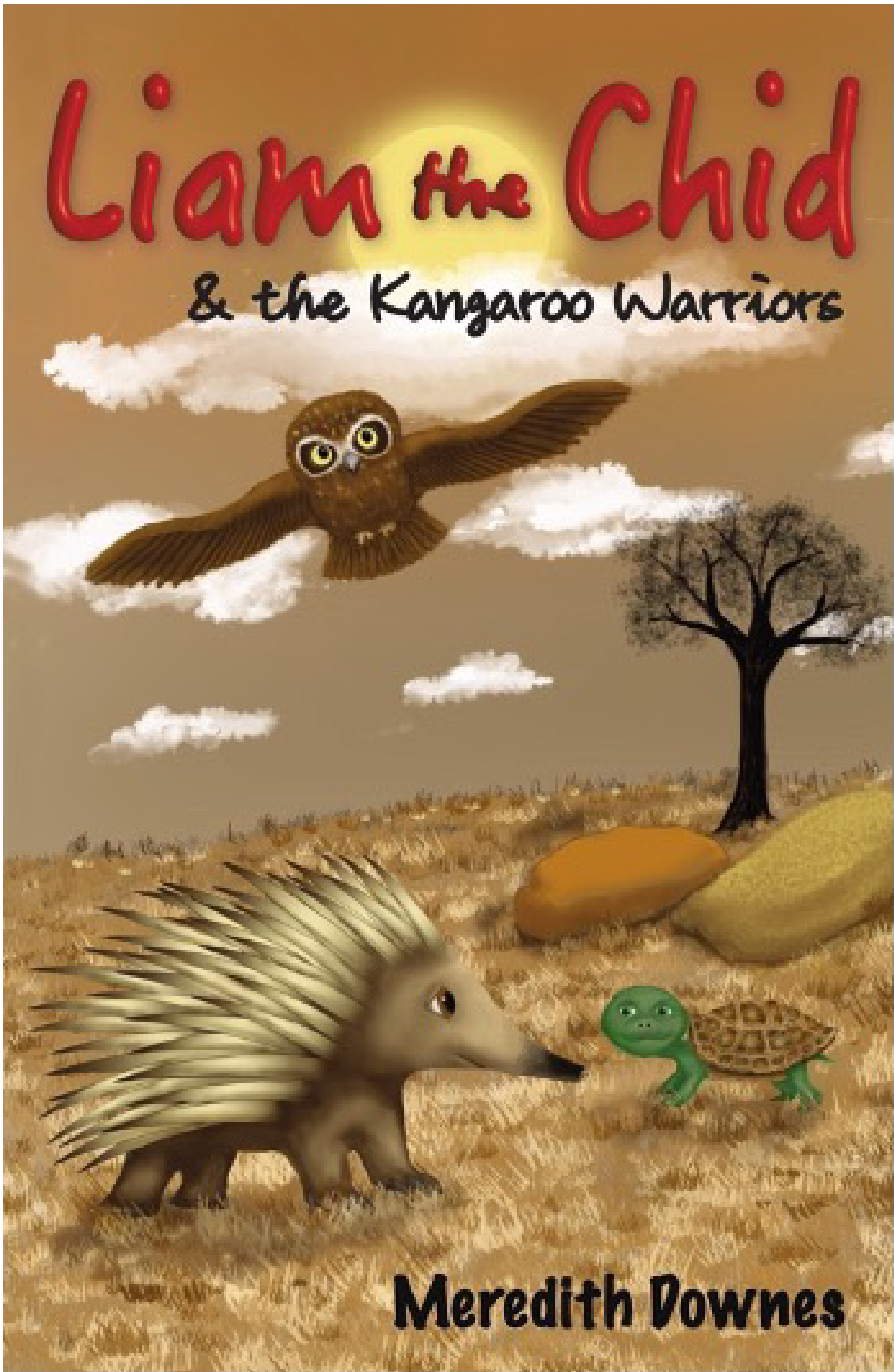


Teacher Notes



Liam the Chid & the Kangaroo Warriors

Meredith Downes

Liam the Chid, Book 1
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Book Synopsis

Liam is an echidna destined for trouble. A fierce fire inside him makes him do strange things...crazy things! Like standing up to the wicked Goanna Gang, something no other echidna has ever dared before. But when Liam learns he must find the kangaroo warriors and learn their secret fighting arts, he knows it's the craziest thing he's done yet! Can he make it all the way to the Roo Plains? Will the Roos really help him or just crush him into tiny pieces? Does he even have what it takes to become a toothless warrior? Find out in "Liam the Chid and the Kangaroo Warriors".

Themes

- Friendship
- Individuality
- Bullying
- Resilience
- Australian wildlife

Writing Style

Liam the Chid and the Kangaroo Warriors is an adventure story that follows an echidna called Liam on a hero's journey from a home, where he is friendless and unwelcome, into the unknown, where he discovers friendship and begins to find his place in the world. Along the way, Liam and the other characters discover strength in their individuality, show bravery and resilience in the face of unfair treatment of themselves and others, and embrace the opportunity to change their future and follow their dreams.

The story uses past tense and a third person limited narration style to allow the reader deep insights into Liam's internal world, alongside the external happenings of the story. The characters are richly developed and humour and heart carry the story forward. Readers will empathise with feelings of not fitting in, of making mistakes and the power of standing up for yourself and others.

The story conveys a strongly Australian context, not just through a focus on Australian wildlife and landscapes but in the use of language. The text uses traditional Australian slang, as well as new variations on existing Australian words to create a unique vocabulary that supports the story's world-building.

The illustrations assist the reader to understand the physical characteristics and movements of the different animals and the appearance and feel of the Australian natural environment, as well as the development of and connections between the characters. The text is suitable as a read-aloud for younger readers and an independent reading text for upper primary readers.

Discussion Questions and Activities

English

- When Liam discovers the goannas have stolen his hideout, he begins to feel and act strangely. What do you think is happening to Liam and why do you think it confuses the other echidnas?
- Liam meets two new animals at the beginning of the story – a goanna called Jimmy and a turtle called Flip. How is Liam's experience meeting Jimmy similar to and how is it different from his experience meeting Flip?
- Liam is about to head back to Boggy Hollow the morning after he meets Flip but then he decides to ask for directions to Unu's tree instead. What do you think changed Liam's mind about going back home?

Discussion Questions and Activities (cont.)

- Quickfoot and Liam see his initial escape from the Roo-Lah in different ways. She believes he won but he believes he lost. Describe the two perspectives. Which do you think is correct?
- Liam's hideout is very special to him – it is the place he goes to be by himself and keep his treasures. Do you have a place like that or would you like one? Draw a picture of yourself in your own place, showing what makes it special.
- Unu flies Liam and Flip from Boggy Hollow to the Roo Plains. Imagine you are flying from your home to school and describe what you would see. Give your description to a friend and get them to sketch it to see how accurately you described the changing landscape below.
- Several key characters in the story behave in a way that is different to their own species. Describe how one of these characters is different and how that impacts what happens to them. Reflect upon what makes you different to others in your class or group and how this might give you a new and unique way of looking at or doing things.
- Liam's story is filled with a number of turning points when he had to choose between two options. For example, when he agrees to go to the Roo Plains with Unu. Pick one of these moments and describe what you think might have happened in the story if he had chosen the opposite.
- In the story, you can often hear what Liam is thinking. Imagine you are one of the other characters and write down what you think their thoughts might be in one of the scenes.
- The characters in the book use phrase and words which you may not use in your everyday language (e.g., "Bugs alive!"). Why do you think they use different everyday language to you and how do you think that affects how your reading of the story?

Science

- Throughout the story, scientific facts about the different animals are revealed. Pick one of the characters and list each of the facts you have learned about that type of animal. What other interesting facts can you find out?
- The lives of different types of animals can be very different, from the places they sleep to what they eat to how they look and sound. Imagine you are a type of animal. Describe yourself and what a day in your life looks like.
- How is the landscape of Boggy Hollow different to the Roo Plains? Can you think of two other landscapes that are different? Write a description of each to highlight the differences.

HASS/Personal and Social Capability

- In the story, Liam says he feels like he has a raging fireball in his guts. Describe when you have felt a strong feeling like that and what strategies you used to handle that feeling.
- Tilda, Sammy G. and the Gang have a reputation for treating other animals badly, including Liam. What is this sort of behaviour called and what approaches can someone take to ensure they are safe and treated well when it happens in the human world?
- When Liam comes to the Roo Plains, he learns from Unu that the kangaroos have their own rules or "Rools" that he must follow. Describe a situation where you have visited somewhere with different rules. How easy or hard was it to try to follow them and why?
- The leader of the Bloody Paw believes that Quickfoot should not train with the warriors because she is a girl, even though she is capable and wants to. Do you think this is a fair situation? Share a reflection upon any similar instances in your own experience or the experiences of others.

Author Statement

I have always had a fascination for the wildlife of the Australian bush from the baby river turtle I adopted as a child to the Boobook owl I befriended at university to all the wild and wonderful creatures I have met during my life in this country. I think the natural world of Australia provides much scope for the telling of imaginative tales of heroes and adventure for children that engages their growing sense of wonder in the amazing place where we live and provides them with uniquely Australian stories to love. By creating heroes in the familiar landscape of our own “backyard”, ones who stand up for themselves and embrace individuality, I hoped to create a story that will inspire the making of new heroes in each and every reader of *Liam the Chid and the Kangaroo Warriors*.

Illustrator Statement

For each character in *Liam the Chid and the Kangaroo Warriors*, I studied the physical characteristics and biology of the animal first. As much as possible in the text, I stayed close to the facts of each animal and its behavior so it was my intent to do the same for the illustrations. However, after establishing the general form of what I wanted to draw, I would enhance its appearance and physicality to portray characterisation in facial expression and features, and bodily movement and position – “bending the rules” enough to tell a story with the pictures too.

About the Author/Illustrator

Meredith Downes is an Australian writer and illustrator from Brisbane, Queensland. With an academic background in biology and Australian archaeology, she loves to draw and write adventures about all the quirky characters of the Australian bush she has met at home and in her travels across the country. Previously, Meredith was longlisted for the 2020 Queensland Stories, Songs and Rhymes competition and won the 2022 Storylinks competition for children’s short fiction. She has also written for *The School Magazine*. *Liam the Chid and the Kangaroo Warriors* is her debut novel for kids.

Meredith Downes is available for author and illustrator talks and workshops.

Please contact Meredith via her website, www.meredithdownes.com, for more information.

