



## Fast Fish

written and illustrated by **Gregg Dreise**

### OVERVIEW

Based on a traditional story about the creation of the Murray Cod Fish, Yellow Belly Carp Fish and the transforming Murray-Darling Basin. The story comes with an encouraging message of celebrating differences, learning from mistakes and looking to the future.

In the Dreamtime there lived the Goodoo and Thuggai peoples. They looked different to the Murri people who lived nearby. While the Murri's lived in the rocky overhangs and hunted bigger animals, the Goodoo people lived under the shade of the Coolabah trees and would dig up witchetty grubs. The Murri feared the Goodoo and Thuggai, and their differences. It is up to the Ancestral Beings and the Clever Man, Biamme, to teach the Murris, Goodoo and Thuggai and to remind them that differences are part of the Dreaming Creation.

### Key points:

- The third book in the 'Scales and Tails' series by a best-selling and award-winning author.
- Imbued with First Nations Creation storytelling, *Fast Fish* offers a vibrant and meaningful origin tale about the Murray cod and yellow belly carp and how they came to be.
- Story embedded in the geography and spiritual significance of the Murray-Darling Basin.
- Filled with vibrant, contemporary colourful First Nations art.
- Underlying theme of the story is to 'Learn to embrace differences, not fear them'.
- *Fast Fish* accepts differences, showcases a healthy respect for others, and shows that overcoming intolerance changes lives.
- Teacher support material linked to the Australian curriculum.
- Marketing and publicity campaign.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

**Gregg Dreise** is a proud descendant of the Gomerai/Kamilaroi and Euahlayi people of south-west Queensland and north-west New South Wales. His storytelling shows his pride in his Indigenous culture, and he creates beautiful morality tales to help us all to rise up to be our best. His Cultural stories have a wonderful way of showing the actions of animals to help us humans to grow up with morals and respect.

His other titles published by Magabala Books are: *Silly Birds*, *Kookoo Kookaburra*, *Mad Magpie*, *Awesome Emu*, *Cunning Crow*, *Super Snake*, *Lethal Lizards*.

Other works published by Puffin include: *Days of Warmth* (2024), *Today's Sun* (2021), *Circles of Life* (2024), *Hello and Welcome* (2021), *My Culture and Me* (2019)



## THEMES

### First Nations Peoples

- First Nations
  - ▷ The Dreaming
  - ▷ Cultural Beliefs (Goomelroi/Kamilaroi and Euahlayi people of south-west Queensland and northwest and north central New South Wales)
  - ▷ Spirituality; Creation
  - ▷ Ancestors
- Storytelling
- Respect
- Acceptance; Tolerance
- Diversity
- Murray-Darling Basin
- Murray Cod and Yellowbelly Carp Fish

## AUDIENCE AND WRITING STYLE

The third title in Gregg Dreise's Scales and Tales morality series, *Fast Fish* is a dreaming story from the Goomelroi/Kamilaroi and Euahlayi people of south-west Queensland and the north-west/central north region of New South Wales. With important messages of diversity, acceptance and learning from one's mistakes, *Fast Fish* incorporates the Rainbow Serpent's creation of the water ways and explores the power and wisdom that ancestral creators impart. It is also a creation story about the Murray-Darling Basin, Murray Cod and Yellow Belly Carp. The message underpinning the text is: 'learn to embrace differences, not fear them', a prominent theme in this series. Beautiful Aboriginal artwork complements this story that invites readers to celebrate diversity, develop from slip-ups and look with positivity towards the future. It is suitable for a range of primary school students exploring First Nations culture and themes of acceptance, personal growth and making the future count.

## LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

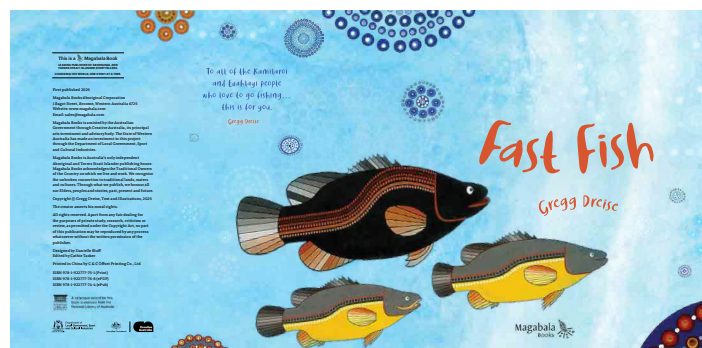
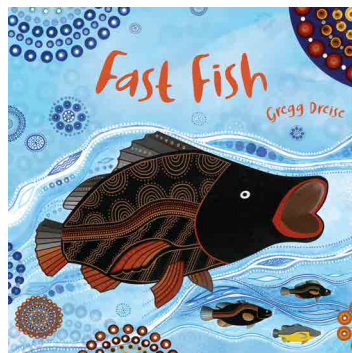
This book and the classroom activities provided are primarily relevant to the following areas of the Australian Curriculum:

Learning area	Year level
English	F-5
The Arts	1-6
Science	1-2; 6

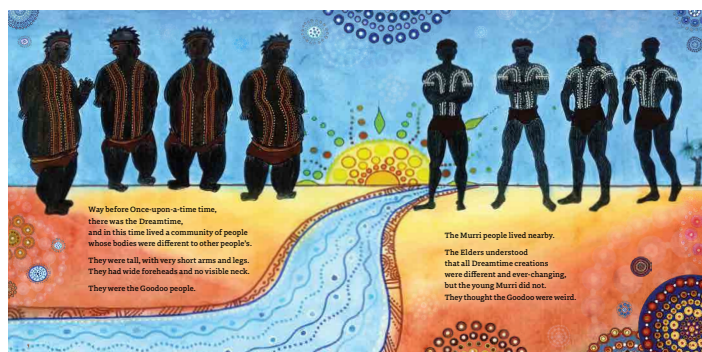
The appendix highlights relevant content descriptions from the Australian Curriculum (V9) that relate to the text and classroom ideas provided..

## CLASSROOM IDEAS

- Before reading, discuss the cover, title page and blurb of the book. Describe the facial expressions and body language of the fish. Make predictions about the story. After reading *Fast Fish*, return to this discussion. How have your ideas changed? What clues were given throughout the text of how this story might unfold?

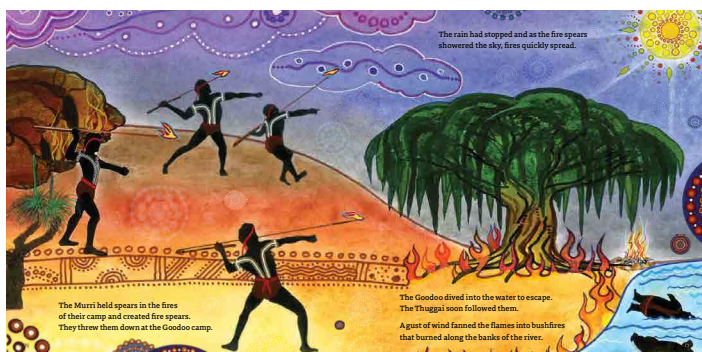


- The text begins, 'Way back before Once-upon-a-time, there was the Dreamtime'. What is the Dreamtime? Discuss how Dreaming stories include explanations about creation.
- How does the illustration below show the relationship between the Goodoo and Murri people at this stage of the story? Why might the young Murri be fearful of the Goodoo?

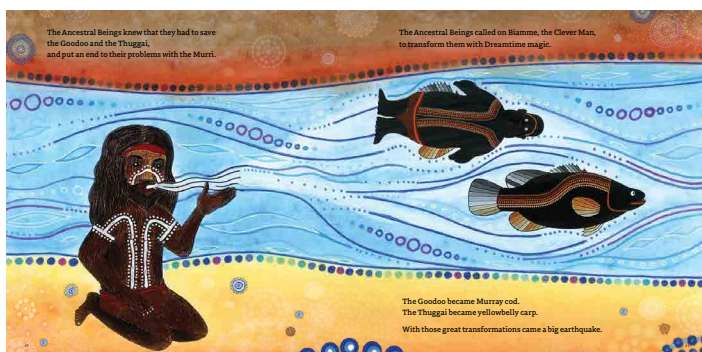


## CLASSROOM IDEAS

- When they return from the Moth Festival, the young Murri mistake the Thuggai for Goodoo people. Why has this been included in the story?
- How is fire used in *Fast Fish*?
- If you were the Murri Elders, what would you say to the young Murri about their actions and fear of the Goodoo people?
- In a reflection, share a time when your elders have shared their wisdom and knowledge with you. How did this help you grow as a person?
- What is your opinion of the Thuggai's actions? Debate whether the Murri were justified in their response. What advice would you give them both?
- Who do you think learns the most from their mistakes in *Fast Fish*? Justify your ideas using evidence from the text.
- With reference to the illustration below, discuss how this story would be different had the Murri reacted more calmly to the Thuggai.

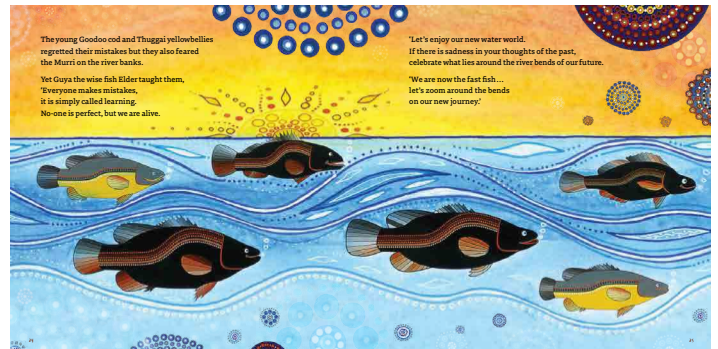


- What role does Biamme, the Clever Man, play in this story? How would the story be different without him?

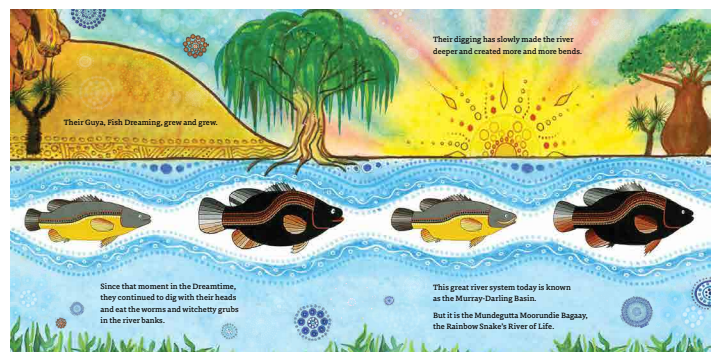


- In your own words, retell the creation story of the Murray-Darling Basin.

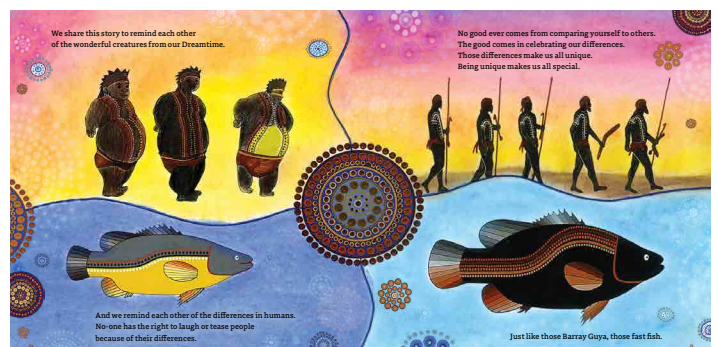
- Discuss Guya the wise fish Elder's words in the page opening below. In a reflection, share what you have learnt from his wisdom.



- Using the illustration below, explain to a friend what is happening in this part of the story. How does it link to earlier parts of *Fast Fish*?



- What have been the consequences of human actions in *Fast Fish*? What have been the consequences of some of your actions? What can you take from this story to help you learn from your mistakes?
- Write a recount of one of your mistakes. What do you wish you could go back and change? In what ways can mistakes in fact be helpful?
- Create a graphic organiser that shows the strengths of the Murri, Goodoo and Thuggai people.
- What are your strengths? What are the strengths of your classmates? How are you unique? Create a classroom display to celebrate the differences and strengths within your class.



## CLASSROOM IDEAS

- What do you think is the main message in *Fast Fish*?
  - Write a recount of this story from a Goodoo person's point of view.
  - Retell this story through a dramatisation. Write a script and create props to help engage your audience.
  - Which is your favourite page opening in *Fast Fish*? Why? Share with a friend.
  - It is up to the Ancestral Beings and the Clever Man, Biamme, to teach the Murris, Goodoo and Thuggai and to remind them that differences are part of the Dreaming Creation. Why are such stories shared?
  - The theme of celebrating differences rather than fearing them is central to *Fast Fish*. What action can you take to live out this mantra?
  - Use Talking Strips to retell *Fast Fish*.
- Murray Cod and Yellow Belly Carp are important species that have become threatened due to a range of hazards. Conduct research into these issues using the following sources:
    - ▷ <https://flow-mer.org.au/cultural-value-of-a-yellowbelly/#:~:text= Casting%20a%20net%20or%20line,little%20lily%20on%20the%20river.>
    - ▷ <https://www.mdb.fish/fish-fact-sheets/murray-cod#:~:text=Murray%20cod%20is%20an%20icon,River%20and%20all%20its%20fishes.>
    - ▷ <https://www.bushheritage.org.au/species/murray-cod?srsId=AfmBOoq6Nii44aQl4HUduqpf6X2Z9XA4-12e6WQOTSm4hq4nvXpnnP5r>

First	Then	Next	Finally

- Have you ever felt different or 'weird'? Share in a reflection. During Circle Time, invite volunteers to share their experiences. Discuss the importance of being respectful, sensitive and tactful during such conversations.
- In what ways is the Biamme wise? Why is he called the 'Clever Man'?
- Read the other stories in the Scales and Tales series – Super Snake and Lethal Lizard – as companion texts to *Fast Fish*. How are they similar and different?
- In what ways is *Fast Fish* a story about respect?
- What have you learnt about the Murray-Darling Basin by reading *Fast Fish*?
- Find out more using the sites below. Share your learnings on a digital poster. Include a map of the Basin that shows First Nations countries as well as major towns and cities.
  - ▷ <https://www.mdba.gov.au/publications-and-data/school-resources>
  - ▷ <https://www.mdba.gov.au/publications-and-data/school-resources/lesson-packages>
  - ▷ <https://www.dccew.gov.au/campaign/murraydarling/first-nations#:~:text=First%20Nations%20Culture%20is%20intertwined,ACT%2C%20Victoria%20and%20South%20Australia.>



### Year Curriculum Area V9

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#### F English

##### Language

- [AC9EFLA07](#) explore the contribution of images and words to meaning in stories and informative texts

##### Literature

- [AC9EFLE01](#) share ideas about stories, poems and images in literature, reflecting on experiences that are similar or different to their own by engaging with texts by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors and illustrators
- [AC9EFLE02](#) respond to stories and share feelings and thoughts about their events and characters
- [AC9EFLE03](#) recognise different types of literary texts and identify features including events, characters, and beginnings and endings
- [AC9EFLE05](#) retell and adapt familiar literary texts through play, performance, images or writing

##### Literacy

- [AC9EFLY05](#) use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising and questioning to understand and discuss texts listened to, viewed or read independently
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#### 1 English

##### Language

- [AC9E1LA08](#) compare how images in different types of texts contribute to meaning

##### Literature

- [AC9E1LE01](#) discuss how language and images are used to create characters, settings and events in literature by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors and illustrators
- [AC9E1LE02](#) discuss literary texts and share responses by making connections with students' own experiences
- [AC9E1LE03](#) discuss plot, character and setting, which are features of stories
- [AC9E1LE05](#) orally retell or adapt a familiar story using plot and characters, language features including vocabulary, and structure of a familiar text, through role-play, writing, drawing or digital tools

##### Literacy

- [AC9E1LY05](#) use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising and questioning when listening, viewing and reading to build literal and inferred meaning by drawing on vocabulary and growing knowledge of context and text structures
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#### 2 English

##### Language

- [AC9E2LA08](#) understand that images add to or multiply the meanings of a text

##### Literature

- [AC9E2LE01](#) discuss how characters and settings are connected in literature created by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors and illustrators
- [AC9E2LE02](#) identify features of literary texts, such as characters and settings, and give reasons for personal preferences
- [AC9E2LE05](#) create and edit literary texts by adapting structures and language features of familiar literary texts through drawing, writing, performance and digital tools

##### Literacy

- [AC9E2LY05](#) use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning
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### 3-4 The Arts

#### Visual Arts

- [AC9AVA2E02](#) explore examples of visual arts created by First Nations Australians
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### 3 English

#### Language

- [AC9E3LA09](#) identify how images extend the meaning of a text
- [AC9E3LE01](#) discuss characters, events and settings in different contexts in literature by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors and illustrators
- [AC9E3LE02](#) discuss connections between personal experiences and character experiences in literary texts and share personal preferences
- [AC9E3LE03](#) discuss how an author uses language and illustrations to portray characters and settings in texts, and explore how the settings and events influence the mood of the narrative

#### Literacy

- [AC9E3LY05](#) use comprehension strategies when listening and viewing to build literal and inferred meaning, and begin to evaluate texts by drawing on a growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features
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### 4 English

#### Literature

- [AC9E4LE01](#) recognise similar storylines, ideas and relationships in different contexts in literary texts by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors
- [AC9E4LE03](#) discuss how authors and illustrators make stories engaging by the way they develop character, setting and plot tensions

#### Literacy

- [AC9E4LY05](#) use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning, to expand topic knowledge and ideas, and evaluate texts
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### 3-4 The Arts

#### Visual Arts

- [AC9AVA4E02](#) explore how First Nations Australians use visual arts to communicate their connection to and responsibility for Country/Place
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### 5 English

#### Literature

- [AC9E5LE01](#) - identify aspects of literary texts that represent details or information about historical, social and cultural contexts in literature by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors
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### 5-6 The Arts

#### Visual Arts

- [AC9AVA6E02](#) - explore ways that First Nations Australians use visual arts to continue and revitalise cultures
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#### Cross-curriculum Priorities

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

#### General Capabilities

Intercultural Understanding    Ethical Understanding  
Literacy

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