



The Eagle Inside

Teachers notes

Written by Jack Manning Bancroft
Illustrated by Bronwyn Bancroft
Published May 2015 by Little Hare

SYNOPSIS

Jimmy is the smallest bird on the school. He is surrounded by big, tough, noisy birds that are all stronger and faster and braver than he is. He feels different in every way, and is sure he will never fit in. But when Eagle reminds him that being small isn't necessarily a weakness, Jimmy discovers how being different can also be a strength.

A gorgeously illustrated story that tells an important tale of how everyone needs a little reassuring in life. Entailing the perfect mix of self motivation, inspiration, friendship and mentoring.

THEMES

The aim of this book is to inspire. It is especially valuable for those who feel alone or different, and for those who don't feel confident in their abilities to do something unique. It is also about negative effect of bullying, the positive value of mentorship, the practice of positive thinking, and the process of finding strength in one's individual differences.

- Confidence
- Individuality
- Bullying
- Motivation
- Inspiration
- Friendship
- Mentorship

WRITING STYLE

Jack Manning Bancroft has chosen to tell this story in the form of a fable and learning story. At the same time he has adopted a contemporary voice, so that the story flows lightly and the characters speak in a style and manner that resonates with young readers. He has chosen a variety of Australian birds to typify the different personalities — for example, Eagle represents wisdom and strength, while Cockatoo represents a loud and raucous bully. Jimmy himself is a honeyeater, and the delicacy and smallness of this species perfectly illustrates his sensitive character. Jack's language is rich with action and feeling, especially as the excitement builds.



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ILLUSTRATION STYLE

Bronwyn Bancroft practices contemporary Indigenous art. Using a modern palette, she draws inspiration from the patterns she finds in the Australian landscape, and is particularly inspired by the love she feels for the landscape of her place of birth. Bronwyn says, 'All my inspiration comes from the reservoir of the Washpool Creek,' located in Northern New South Wales.

Bronwyn's art is also strongly reminiscent of stained-glass windows, with strong black outlines enclosing areas of vivid flat colour. Bronwyn begins by painting a broad background colour. She then plots the major features of each picture, painting the outlines and base colours of each object. Once the overall elements are in place she begins to build in the detail. This is the most time-consuming part of the process, as she continues to build layer upon layer of colour, sometimes painting for as many as 16 hours a day.

The illustrations for *The Eagle Inside* reflect the actions and emotions of the text. Bronwyn has amplified the abstract qualities of her compositions to create a powerful impression of the spectrum of emotions that Jimmy feels, and to exaggerate the sometimes dizzying experiences tiny Jimmy is forced to undergo.

AUTHOR BACKGROUND

At 29 years of age Jack Manning Bancroft is the CEO and Founder of AIME (www.aimementoring.com). In 2005, then a 19-year-old university student, Jack founded the AIME Program with 25 Indigenous kids in Redfern. AIME incorporated in 2008 and Jack became a CEO at the age of 22.

Jack is now one of Australia's youngest CEOs, leading a team of nearly 100 staff across the country. In 2013, AIME was voted 26th in BRW's Best Places to Work. Today, AIME works with over 3500 Indigenous high school students and 1250 university students act as mentors across Australia.

Over the last four years, back-to-back, AIME students have finished school at almost the same rate as every Australian child. By 2018, AIME seeks to expand across the nation to connect with 10,000 Indigenous high school kids annually and to have all of these kids finishing school at the same rate as every Australian child.

In recognition of AIME's impact, Jack was named the 2010 NSW Young Australian of the Year, 2010 Young People's Australian Human Rights Medallist and received the University of Sydney 2010 Young Alumni of the Year Award.

Jack is also the CEO and a Founder of Fone Free Feb — www.fonefreefeb.com — and a graduate of the University of Sydney and Stanford.



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Born in Tenterfield, northern New South Wales, Bronwyn Bancroft is a descendant of the Djanbun clan of the Bundjalung nation.

Bronwyn is a leading Indigenous artist, illustrator and art administrator whose work is held at the National Gallery of Australia, the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Australian Museum.

Bronwyn has illustrated several award-winning books for children and she has a long history of involvement in community activism. She is also the mother to three children: Jack, Ella and Rubyrose.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

In Bronwyn's artwork we see not just landscapes, but images of country that also evoke human biology and spirit. Her art represents a combination of geographical, biological and psychological levels of existence. Salt pans, rivers, forests and panoramas remind us of cells, molecules and atoms, networks of nerves, neural pathways, the flow of blood and oxygen. Her paintings also suggest the tangle of thoughts and the ebb and flow of emotion. Abstract figures inhabit the trunks of tree, suggesting living spirits.

STUDY NOTES

1. The author uses a variety of Australian native birds to represent different characters in the story, especially Jimmy the honeyeater, Cockatoo and Eagle. How do these characters suit the types of bird the author has chosen? Write a list of three or more Australian native birds not mentioned in the story, and think of characters they might represent.
2. At the top of the second page of the book Jack Manning Bancroft (JMB) has written a note to readers. How do you think this note is helpful for understanding why Jack wrote this book?
3. One of the messages in *The Eagle Inside* is the positive effect of having a mentor. Discuss what the word 'mentor' means and decide who the mentor is in *The Eagle Inside*. List the ways this mentor helped Jimmy. Then write three ways a mentor could help you with your goals.
4. Bronwyn Bancroft has used some basic techniques in designing the art for each page. Go through the art and identify horizontal lines and patterns, vertical lines and patterns, wavy lines and patterns, angular lines and patterns, radiating lines and patterns, and circular lines and patterns. Once you are familiar with these different techniques, think about the next two questions.



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5. The story of *The Eagle Inside* alternates between still scenes and action scenes. Which three illustrations look most action-filled to you? Choose your favourite action scene and suggest three techniques the illustrator has used to make the scene seem full of action.
6. Which illustrations in the book look the quietest to you? Choose your favourite quiet scene and suggest three techniques the illustrator has used to make the scene seem quiet.

ACTIVITIES

- Ask your class to list out the different birds that feature in *The Eagle Inside*. After they have finished, go through the book and make sure you haven't missed any.
- Briefly discuss what mentoring is and how it can help. Ask your class what they would ask for guidance with. You could even set up a mentoring/buddy program for your class with an older class at your school.
- Put everyone's name in a hat, and have each child pick out one name each. Have your class write something positive that about the classmate they have on the paper — it could be something they're good at or that they appreciate about their classmate. You can then read all of the positive affirmations to the class.
- Have your class research honeyeaters, then come back with their individual research to create a class research project. If you want to have them undertake another project, then split up into groups to research the rest of the birds on your list.
- Talk to your class about Indigenous art. Conduct a class project, researching the history of the art, different well-know Indigenous artists and have them choose their favourite. Ask them to present it to the class explaining the artwork and why they chose it to present over any others they found.
- Ask your class to create their own Indigenous artwork and a short poem to go with it. Present these to the class.