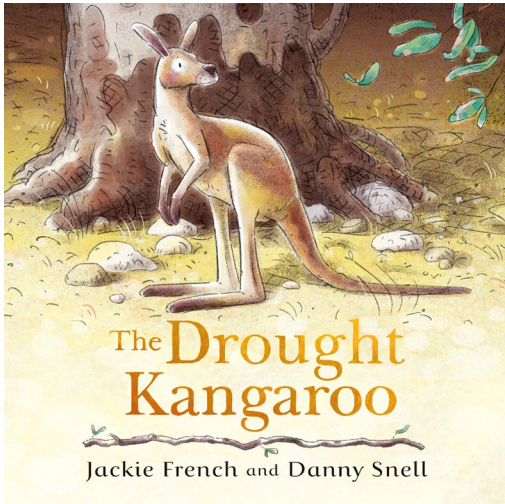




ISBN: 9781460765197

Notes by: Sue Warren and
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Published: November 2025

Formats: Hardback and eBook

The Drought Kangaroo

Jackie French & Danny Snell

Book Summary

Following on from *The Fire Wombat* and *The Turtle and the Flood*, *The Drought Kangaroo* is the third title in the series that focuses on animals and the challenges they face in environmental disaster, be it fire, flood, or drought.

Drought has devastated Joseph the kangaroo's home. He longs for green grass and the cool, clear water he can smell in the distance.

Kangaroos can leap higher and further than any other animal, but can even Joseph's strong hind legs help him reach the waterhole? And will the new mob there accept a stranger?

Created by Jackie French and Danny Snell, the award-winning duo of *The Fire Wombat* and *The Turtle and the Flood*, this is a true story about a young kangaroo who went on the longest journey of his life and ended up living by a creek on Jackie's property.

Key Learning Outcomes

- AC9SIU02
- AC9EFLE01
- AC9EILY01

Recommended Reading Age: 3+

Resources Created For: Lower Primary



Themes

- **Natural World – Native Animals:** Inspired by an actual incident, the author creates a narrative that outlines the behaviour/s of a male kangaroo as it grows to adulthood, in a time of severe drought.
- **Natural World – Drought:** The descriptions of a drought-ravaged landscape and the impact on the animals are a vivid reminder that we live in a country prone to drought, which can have unexpected consequences.
- **Natural World – Water:** The main character exemplifies the need of all living things for water. The journey that Joseph takes shows the lengths that some animals will go to in order to find water.

Vocabulary

- **Arced:** a smoothly curving line or movement.
- **Withered:** thin and weak because of disease or injury.
- **Listless:** has no energy or enthusiasm.
- **Tussock:** a type of grass which is much taller and tougher than the grass around it.
- **Sturdy:** strong and healthy.
- **Dazed:** confused and unable to think clearly.
- **Stupefied:** shocked and surprised so much that you can't think clearly.
- **Wearily:** very tired and without much energy.
- **Trundling:** moves slowly with an awkward movement.

Context

1. Share the cover art and title with the class.
 - a) What do students know about drought?
 - (i) Have they ever lived through one?
 - (ii) Do they know what effects it can have in rural and remote parts of Australia?
2. This story is told in a picture book. Do they think the story will be true (non-fiction) or made up (fiction)?
 - a) Can a story ever be both fiction and non-fiction?





Reading Discussion Questions

1. We know that this story is set during a drought. How has the illustrator used colours on the first two spreads to show this?
2. 'Joseph licked his paws to cool his body down.' How do you think this helps kangaroos stay cool?
 - a) Do humans do anything like this to cool down when it's hot?
3. On the second-to-last spread, "... it rained. And rained. The pools became a river. Joseph smelled the soft, wet wind. It carried the scent of lush grass, back where he'd been born, and the creek trickling between its stones.'
 - a) How would you describe the emotions of the kangaroos as it finally rains?
 - b) How are these feelings conveyed to the reader? Consider both text and illustrations.
4. Compare the first spread of illustrations with the last.
 - a) In the first spread the reader is introduced to Joseph and his mob and shown the drought-scarred landscape in which they live.
 - b) What colours are used by the illustrator to demonstrate the effect that drought is having on the environment?
 - c) Why do you think that rocks have been placed in the foreground of the illustration?
 - d) In the final spread of the book, the reader is shown the lush place that forms Joseph's new home.
 - e) What colours are used by the illustrator to demonstrate the effect that plentiful water has on the environment?
 - f) The illustration on the right-hand side also shows rocks in the foreground. How are these different to those in the first spread?
 - g) Other than the colours and the water, what else can be seen in the final illustration that is not present in the first? (as well as the obvious extra plants and trees, you might also like to guide students to look at the variety of vegetation, along with the other animals like the frog and waterbird).
5. If you were Joseph, would you have been brave enough to leave to find water?
6. Can you think of examples where humans need to leave their homes for a long time, or even forever, because of drought or flood?
7. Would you have stayed in your new home after the drought broke?
8. Once you've finished reading the book, including the Author's Note, go back and see if you can find Jackie French in the illustrations.





9. Do you think Joseph and Jackie might be friends today?
 - a) Can you be a friend with a wild animal, not feeding it like you feed a pet, but enjoying each other's company?
 - b) Or, could Jackie and Joseph just be neighbours, who live in the same valley and accept each other?

Key Technique

Anthropomorphism: a literary technique in which human characteristics are attributed to an animal or non-living thing.

1. Who or what is anthropomorphised in *The Drought Kangaroo*?
2. How much has Jackie French anthropomorphised Joseph? She has given him a human name, for example, and put his thoughts into English, but kangaroos do use a series of noises and gestures to talk to each other, and do make considered choices.
3. How would the story be different if we weren't told what Joseph kangaroo is thinking or feeling?
4. Before reading the book, the class discussed the difference between true (non-fiction) or made up (fiction) stories. Do you think anthropomorphism is something that is found in fiction or non-fiction stories?

Activities

1. What other animals can students find in the text and illustrations?
 - a) Are any of these animals native to where you live?
 - b) The reader is given some specific information on these animals, for example 'wonga pigeons'. Based on this information and all of the animals that are found living in the same place, can you work out where in Australia the story might be set?
2. As well as using different colours to show the difference between habitats with water and those without, the illustrator also uses colour to differentiate between different times of day.
 - a) Have a look at spread 4. What different times of day are shown here? How can you tell?
 - b) If you were to use colour to show the different times of day where you live, what colours would you use for early morning, midday and night-time?
 - c) Ask students to do their time-of-day specific artwork using what they have learnt from *The Drought Kangaroo*.





3. Joseph's story is told by a narrator, rather than Joseph himself. Write one or more spreads from the perspective of Joseph.
 - a) As a whole class activity, allocate different spreads to pairs or small groups to write so that the whole story is rewritten.
 - b) As an extension activity, students may like to try writing the story from the perspective of other characters who observe Joseph. For example, the cows on the farm, the driver of the car that Joseph jumps into, or the other members of the mob at the creek.

About the Author & Illustrator

Jackie French AM is an award-winning writer, wombat negotiator, the 2014–2015 Australian Children's Laureate and the 2015 Senior Australian of the Year. In 2016, Jackie became a Member of the Order of Australia for her contribution to children's literature and her advocacy for youth literacy. She is regarded as one of Australia's most popular children's authors and writes across all genres — from picture books, history, fantasy, ecology and sci-fi, to her much-loved historical fiction for a variety of age groups. 'A book can change a child's life. A book can change the world' was the primary philosophy behind Jackie's two-year term as Laureate.

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As a child Danny Snell was a reluctant reader, so it was pictures rather than words that drew him to the wonder of books. Danny went on to study graphic design and illustration at the University of South Australia and he now works as a picture book illustrator and author. Danny illustrates using digital media, focusing on simple compositions, subtle texture and a touch of whimsy. His books have won a number of awards including the CBCA Eve Pownall Award, the Environment Award for Children's Literature, and The Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year Award. Danny lives in Adelaide with his partner, his two daughters and a sleepy old cat. He enjoys cooking and swimming, and yes, he loves to read.

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