



**Editors:** Libby Hathorn and Jude Fell  
**Illustrator:** Tull Suwannakit  
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### Blurb

In *This Is Us*, editors Libby Hathorn and Jude Fell have gathered the voices of all kinds of Australians, from modern poets such as Miriam Wei Wei Lo and Jazz Money to household names such as Banjo Paterson and Judith Wright. Beautifully illustrated by Tull Suwannakit and ideal for sharing with the whole family, this edition brings together old favourites and sure-to-be new favourites in an indispensable addition to your bookshelves.

From poems that whisper to poems that roar, from words of tranquility and heartbreak to the witty and absurd, there is something within these pages to make everyone feel seen and understood.

### About the creators

Libby Hathorn is a seasoned poet, writer and librettist. She has won major literary awards, including Children's Book Council of Australia awards, the Centenary Medal, the Lady Cutler Award and ABIA's Pixie O'Harris Award. She attests to the power of poetry in her work and in her life.

Jude Fell is an acclaimed educator and consultant. She is widely recognised for her dedication to fostering learning through creativity. A strong advocate for students with learning disabilities, she was awarded a University Medal in Education from the University of New England in 1995. A lifelong passion for poetry and the arts is at the heart of her practice.

Tull Suwannakit is an Australian book illustrator and author for children, with a background in animation and fine art. His books have been published in Australia, the US, the UK and Thailand as well as translated into numerous languages throughout the world.

## *This Is Us: Essential Australian Poems for Young People* Teachers' Notes

Recommended for: Years 1–10

*This Is Us: Essential Australian Poems for Young People* is an anthology of 62 poems featuring poets from each state and territory in Australia. This collection seeks to actively represent Australian history and identity, featuring works from First Australians poets alongside traditional bush poetry and contemporary forms such as free verse and slam poetry. Spanning Australia's poetic landscape from the 1880s to present day, this anthology captures diverse voices and experiences that reflect the nation's evolving story.

### General capabilities

Poetry plays a vital role in the Australian curriculum across multiple learning areas by fostering creativity, critical thinking and strong communication skills. Poetry can develop language and literacy skills, encourage students to engage with rhythm, sound and figurative language and allow students to share their ideas and emotions in a creative way. Through reading and composing poetry, students gain an understanding of how language can express meaning, emotion and cultural identity.

### Maths and the Arts

Poetry allows creative exploration of rhythm, metre and pattern recognition, increasing problem solving, numerical literacy and logical thinking skills. Students can respond to poetry through music, arts, drama and multimodal outlets, leaving room for interpretation, performance and visual representation of ideas. Digital tools enable the creation and sharing of multimodal responses, incorporating text, sound, images and video.

### HASS and cross curriculum priorities

Poetry can serve as a historical source, allowing students to explore perspectives and experiences from different times. It can connect learners to Australian history and identity, and in including works by First Australians, poetry can acknowledge and value storytelling traditions and connections to Country and identity. Poetry can be a platform to explore national values, empathy and themes such as reconciliation to promote civic engagement. It can also instill an appreciation of sustainability and global perspectives when exploring representations of people, places and the environment.

### English

These notes will act as a guide to identifying key language devices found in each poem, alongside suggested classroom activities designed to engage students in creative and critical responses, from identifying techniques to composing their own poetry and creative responses.

### Curriculum Links



**Language | Language for interacting with others**

- Year 1: AC9E1LA01: understand how language, facial expressions and gestures are used to interact with others when asking for and providing information, making offers, exclaiming, requesting and giving commands.
- Year 2: AC9E2LA02: explore how language can be used for appreciating texts and providing reasons for preferences.
- Year 9: AC9E9LA02: understand how evaluation can be expressed directly and indirectly using devices such as allusion, evocative vocabulary and metaphor.

**Language | Text structure and organisation**

- Year 2: AC9E2LA03: identify how texts across the curriculum are organised differently and use language features depending on purposes.
- Year 3: AC9E3LA03: describe how texts across the curriculum use different language features and structures relevant to their purpose.
- Year 4: AC9E4LA03: identify how texts across the curriculum have different language features and are typically organised into characteristic stages depending on purposes.

**Literature | Literature and contexts**

- Year 3: AC9E3LE01: discuss characters, events and settings in different contexts in literature by First Nation Australians, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors and illustrators.

**Literature | Engaging with and**

**responding to literature**

- Year 1: AC9E1LE02: discuss literary texts and share responses by making connections with students' own experiences.
- Year 7: AC9E7LE03: explain the ways that literary devices and language features such as dialogue and images are used to create character, and to influence emotions and opinions in different types of texts.

**Literature | Examining Literature**

- Year 1: AC9E1LE04: listen to and discuss poems, chants, rhymes and songs, and imitate and invent sound patterns including alliteration and rhyme.
- Year 3: AC9E3LE04: discuss the effects of some literary devices used to enhance meaning and shape the reader's reaction, including rhythm and onomatopoeia in poetry and prose.
- Year 4: AC9E4LE04: examine the use of literary devices and deliberate word play in literary texts, including poetry, to shape meaning.
- Year 5: AC9E5LE04: examine the effects of imagery, including simile, metaphor and personification, and sound devices in narratives, poetry and songs.
- Year 6: AC9E6LE04: explain the way authors use sound and imagery to create meaning and effect in poetry.
- Year 7: AC9E7LE06: identify and explain how literary devices create layers of meaning in texts, including poetry.
- Year 10: AC9E10LE06: compare and evaluate how 'voice' as a literary device is used in different types of texts, such as poetry, novels and film, to evoke emotional responses.

**Literacy | Analysing, interpreting and**

**evaluating**

- Year 3: 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.



**Learning Activities Before Reading**

**Cover**

Closely examine the front cover and discuss.

- What do you notice about the illustrations?
- What activities can you see people doing?
- Based on the illustrations, who is included in 'us'?
- Why might the illustrator have chosen a variety of people and activities?
- How do the colours make you feel?

**Foreword**

This anthology aims to represent all states and territories around Australia and share the diverse voices and experiences of the Australian people. Consider:

- What would a poem about your local area talk about?
- What poems would you expect to find in a book about Australia?
- What could people from around the world learn about Australia through poetry?
- What images come to mind when you read each of the single word chapter titles?

### While Reading

Use the table at the end of these notes to help students:

- Identify any rhyme scheme, using the same colour to highlight or underline rhyming words at the end of the lines.
- Identify literary devices present such as alliteration, assonance and repetition, and consider if these devices help with the rhythm of the poem.
- Create an anchor chart for language devices found in the poems, adding examples each time you discover them.
- Consider how commas, enjambment and other forms punctuate the poem and affect the pace and rhythm.
- Consider how translating poems may change a word's meaning.
- Explore any unknown words and add them to a class dictionary.

Find videos or sound recordings of poems from *This Is Us* being spoken aloud:

- Why might it be easier to understand the poems when they are read aloud?
- Can you relate to any of the experiences in the poems? If so, which ones?
- Which poem was your favourite? Why? What caught your attention?

Encourage students to play with words:

- Set a creative writing challenge to include different figurative language devices in a poem. Use the table at the end of this resource for inspiration.
- Reverse the devices to plain text. How does this affect the tone or feeling of the text?
- Rewrite the poem using student vernacular—does the meaning of the poem change over generations?

Direct students to creatively respond to a poem:

- Write a short story response.
- Rewrite a stanza from another character's perspective.
- Create a song, dance or play.
- Create an artwork representing the poem or reflect on a personal connection to the work.

### Analyse Bush Poetry

Traditionally, bush poems have a clear rhyming pattern and are written in stanza form. Students can create a storyboard to understand these poems by:

- Identifying the characters in the stanza using different colours or underlines.
- Creating an image or icon that summarises the stanza (this can be a collage).
- Rewriting each stanza as a story without rhyme.

This can be completed as an individual craft project or in small groups focusing on a stanza each to create a larger collaborative product.



### After Reading

Discover forms of poetry not included in this anthology, including but not limited to:

- Haiku
- Acrostic
- Limericks
- Sonnets
- Blackout poetry

Compose a poem based on a personal experience or favourite place:

- Use a photo or a memory as a stimulus.
- Describe the people, place, activities, animals or things you remember.
- Use the name of the location and clear features (shops, trees, landmarks).
- Brainstorm the senses used in this memory or place (sight, smell, taste, touch, hearing).
  - What does the ground and the air feel like?
  - What does the place smell like?
  - What can you hear?
- What metaphors or similes can you use for this place or memory?
- Can you present this poem in a different medium?

### Analyse poetry using the SMILE method

Analysing poetry helps students gain a deeper understanding of the meaning and techniques used and their impact on the reader. SMILE is an acronym that helps students remember important aspects of a poem to interpret, with each letter standing for a separate poetic element (structure, meaning, imagery, language and effect). Use the table attached at the end of these notes to explore different poetry techniques, ensuring you introduce the technique and break down each element with students, and find examples within a selected poem. As you continue to scaffold students, they will gain the confidence to independently analyse a poem of their choice.

#### Structure

- What type of poem is it (ballad, free verse, lyric, other)?
- Is it a rhyming poem? How does this affect the sound and rhythm?
- How many stanzas and lines per stanza can you find? Is this regular or irregular? Is there a reason for this?
- Comment on line length: short or long lines? What are the effects?

#### Meaning

- What is the main idea (theme) of the poem?
- What is being valued?
- What is being criticised?
- Look at the title in relation to the poem—it can act as an extra line and hints at meaning.

### Imagery

How do types of imagery support the themes? What effect is created? Consider the following types of imagery:

- Visual imagery (sights)
- Aural imagery (sounds)
- Tactile imagery (touch)
- Olfactory imagery (smells)
- Gustatory imagery (tastes)

### Language

- Look at word choice, grammar, and punctuation (including capitalisation) to see how language supports the themes and creates an effect.
- What register is used (formal, informal, colloquial, etc.)?
- What can language tell you about the about the poet or the subject of the poem.?

### Effect

- How does this poem make you feel?
- Did you like this poem? Why/Why not?



### Key language devices in *This Is Us*

*This Is Us* contains 62 poems for a range of audiences. Poems marked with an asterisk are more suited to secondary classrooms, or for in depth discussions. This table provides some of the key poetic devices you may find throughout the book to support your selection of texts to explore with your students. This selection is not exhaustive, and your students may discover additional devices or connect with different themes as you explore.

Connect!			
Title and author	Themes	Key devices	Page
The Wonder Thing by Libby Hathorn	Nature	Rhetorical questioning, simile	3
My Australia by Sara Mansour*	Identity, belonging	Sensory detail, repetition, juxtaposition, rhythm, symbolism	5
Baladjarang by ado Webster	First Australians, identity, language	Repetition	7
A Place to Return to by Miriam Wei Wei Lo*	Identity, language	Metaphor, personification, hyperbole, enjambment, contrast	9
Look!			
Title and author	Themes	Key devices	Page
Emus by Mary E. Fullerton	Nature	Rhyme, enjambment	13
Egrets by Judith Wright	Nature	Rhyme, rhythm, contrast	14
Orb Spider by Judith Beveridge*	Nature	Simile, assonance, metaphor, personification, enjambment	15
A Kangaroo Is in the Sky by Ali Cobby Echemann	First Australians, identity	Chemamorphism, metaphor, assonance	16
The Dandenongs by Vance Palmer*	Nature, landscape	Anthromorphism, simile, rhyme, personification, consonance	17
Pejar Creek by Mary Gilmore	Nature, lanscape	Rhyme, rhythm, sibilance, personification, visual and auditory imagery, alliteration, repetition	19
Sing!			
Title and author	Themes	Key devices	Page
(Warren) by Luke Davies*	Music	Metaphor, enjambment, rhyme	23
Blown or Beaten by Geoff Page*	Music	Metaphor, enjambment, sibilance	24
Prayer for Rain by David Campbell	Nature	Rhyme, sibilance, anthromorphism, metaphor, repetition, tone	25
Grey Rain by Mollie E. McNutt	Nature	Personification, alliteration, symbolism, repetition, tone	26
Bell-birds by Henry Kendall*	Nature	Rhyme, alliteration, repetition, metaphor, personification, assonance	27
Song Be Delicate by John Shawn Neilson	Emotion	Repetition, rhyme, personification, assonance, symbolism, tone	29
Laugh!			
Title and author	Themes	Key devices	Page
I Didn't Do My Homework by Libby Hathorn	Humour	Rhyme, rhythm, tone	33
The Cheese Poem by Roberta Lowing	Humour	Concrete and shape poetry	34
I Don't Know What a Poem is For by Alexa Moses	Humour	Rhyme, haiku, free verse, rhetorical questioning	35
The Man from Ironbark by Andrew 'Banjo' Paterson	Bush poetry	Juxtaposition, rhyme, rhythm, humour, Australian vernacular, tone, characterisation, hyperbole, metaphor, repetition	37

The Rear End of a Wombat by Jackie French	Humour	Rhyme	39
The Summer Palace by Michael Leunig	Nature	Metaphor, rhyme, symbolism	41
Mushrooms by Michael Leunig	Nature	Metaphor, tone, rhyme	41
The Swan by Michael Leunig	Nature	Personification, rhyme	42
I Got Nitz! by Simon Mellor	Humour	Rhyme, rhythm, hyperbole, repetition	43
Mighty Mosquito by Jill McDougall	Humour	Rhyme, rhythm, personification, hyperbole, colloquial language	45

### Dream!

Title and author	Themes	Key devices	Page
Lyrebirds by Judith Wright	Nature	Personification, simile, tone, repetition	49
so too the sunrise by Jazz Money	First Australians, nature, identity	Repetition, metaphor, enjambment, personification, symbolism	50
Seeing My Parents by Peter Skrzynecki*	Family, longing	Enjambment, tone	51
Dreaming by Elizabeth Cummings	Identity	Rhetorical questioning, rhyme, rhythm, metaphor	52
The Sleepout by Les Murray*	Imagination	Personification, assonance	53
The Shadows by Thea Astley*	Imagination	Rhyme, repetition, juxtaposition, contrast, metaphor, enjambment	54
The Quốc Bird by Thuy Ai Nguyen Thi*	Identity, migration	Repetition, symbolism, personification, contrast, rhetorical questioning	55

### Journey!

Title and author	Themes	Key devices	Page
The Train in the Night by Elizabeth Riddell	Travel	Rhyme, repetition, personification, enjambment	59
On the Night Train by Henry Lawson*	Nature, travel	Voice, rhyme, personification, repetition, rhetorical questioning	60
The Ballad of the Drover by Henry Lawson*	Bush Poetry	Rhyme, rhythm, Australian colloquialism, tone, personification, symbolism, alliteration, cacophony, juxtaposition, metaphor	61
Chain Link Fence by Hasib Hourani*	Migration, identity	Symbolism, enjambment, juxtaposition	63
The Death of the Bird by A.D. Hope*	Migration, mortality	Symbolism, rhyme, analogy	65
The Road by Nancy Cato	Travel	Simile, zoomorphism, rhyme, juxtaposition	67
You and I by C.J. Dennis	Imagination	Personification, contrast, repetition, rhyme	68

### Echo!

Title and author	Themes	Key devices	Page
Bahloo by Evelyn Araluen	First Australians	Repetition, enjambment, personification	71
Things That Go Squark by Peter Wesley-Smith	Humour	Nonsense poetry, rhyme, repetition, rhythm, imagery (auditory), onomatopoeia	73
Tree Australia Tree by Libby Hathorn	Nature	Visual and auditory imagery, repetition, personification	74

An Evening Melody by Tenzin Choegyal*	Nature, connection	Repetition, tone, metaphor, personification	75
Old Horses by Max Fatchen	Nature	Repetition, personification, rhythm	77
Song of the Yellow by John Shaw Neilson	Identity	Visual and auditory imagery, repetition, personification, symbolism, metaphor	78

**Wonder!**

Title and author	Themes	Key devices	Page
Understand, Old One by Oodgeroo Noonuccal	First Australians, heritage, change	Contrast, juxtaposition, symbolism, tone	81
Burning Rice by Eileen Chong*	Migration, heritage	Assonance, metaphor, juxtaposition	82
Diamond Snake by Peter Skrzynecki	Nature, migration	Symbolism, tone, free verse, metaphor	83
Ropes by Kate Llewellyn	Freedom and restraint	Metaphor, sensory language, tone, free verse, symbolism, personification, repetition	84
The Visit by Jude Fell*	Nature, longing	Personification, rhyme, sibilance, tone	85
Ningimpi Nungampi Paywuta Manta by Theresa Sainty	First Australians, Country, connection	Repetition, personification	87

**Celebrate!**

Title and author	Themes	Key devices	Page
I Am by Mary Duroux	First Australians	Repetition, metaphor	91
Stooping to Drink by David Malouf	Nature, humanity	Sensory language, symbolism, sibilance	92
After Rain by Diane Fahey	Nature	Personification, consonance, metaphor	93
The Swamp by Nandi Chinna	Nature	Assonance, sibilance	94
Praise and Its Shadow by Robert Adamson*	Nature	Sibilance, enjambment, tone, symbolism, free verse	95
Colour by Dorothea Mackellar	Nature	Personification, metaphor, contrast	96
Southern Hemisphere Year by Jude Fell	Nature	Rhyme, tone, symbolism	97
Ngurambang Yali—Country Speaks by Jeanine Leane	First Australians, identity, Country	Sensory language	98

**Digital Classroom Modules**

- <https://www.library.gov.au/learn/digital-classroom/australian-childrens-literature>
- <https://www.library.gov.au/learn/digital-classroom/documenting-federation/poet-australia>
- <https://www.library.gov.au/learn/digital-classroom/cultural-perspectives-literature/poetry-judith-wright-bora-ring>

