



# STORYMAKERS

P A R T   T W O

PERCY TREZISE & DICK ROUGHSEY

*A Journey to Quinkin Country*

T E A C H E R S ' N O T E S

# **CONTENTS**

**INTRODUCTION**

Page 3

**ABOUT DICK ROUGHSEY**

Page 4

**ABOUT PERCY TREZISE**

Page 5

**BACKGROUND TO THE BOOKS**

Page 6

**ON MAKING A PICTURE BOOK**

Page 6

**SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES**

Page 8-10

DVD Viewing

Branching into Books

Making stories

**PERCY TREZISE AND DICK ROUGHSEY'S BOOKS**

Page 11

**TEACHERS' REFERENCE**

Page 11

**CONTACT DETAILS**

Page 11

# INTRODUCTION

*Storymakers* is a series about internationally known Australian writers and illustrators of children's books.

The series is designed to develop children's awareness of how books are conceived and created, and to encourage a love for books and reading.

Each film in the series will highlight a different aspect of the process of creating a book. Characters in the books will come to life through live-action drama or animation. Enactments of key scenes from the books will be interwoven with commentary from the author/illustrator who will give background to the passages in the book.

In each DVD, authors/illustrators will talk about how they start on a particular scene, character or story idea. They will also discuss how personal experiences have influenced their works. The series will also look at the processes involved from manuscript to print—the endless revisions, re-writes, editing and in the case of picture books, the actual design process. Above all, the authors/illustrators in the series will come across as "real people" who get their ideas from anywhere and everywhere...their past, memories of their own childhood and life around them. Their works will come to life in the series, in ways which speak directly to children's imagination.

**STORYMAKERS: PERCY TREZISE AND DICK ROUGHSEY—A Journey to Quinkin Country** shows how the writer-artist team, Percy Trezise and Dick Roughsey came to produce their brilliant award-winning picture book series based on the Aboriginal legends of Cape York. The DVD follows Kylie Belling, Aboriginal actress, as she takes a trip up to far North Queensland—Quinkin Country—to find out more about the increasingly famous Aboriginal rock art sites, and to hear how these paintings have been translated by Percy Trezise and Dick Roughsey into their very popular books.

Kylie introduces us to one of their stories, **TURRAMULLI, THE GIANT QUINKIN**, and this story becomes a vibrant and colourful thread running through the DVD. This is a bright and lively DVD which will be a great tool in developing awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal dreamtime stories. It can also be used to develop an understanding of the art of storying and how stories can be recorded for others to learn and enjoy. The series is designed for upper primary school children and for secondary and tertiary students studying Children's Literature courses.

## ABOUT DICK ROUGHSEY

Dick Roughsey was born on Mornington Island in the Gulf of Carpentaria somewhere around 1920. A member of the Lardil tribe, Dick was named Goobalathaldin after his father, meaning “rough seas”.

As a young boy Dick played and ran free with his friends along the shoreline, catching fish and collecting the many varieties of shellfish abundant on the island. At the age of seven or eight, Dick joined the other children at the Mission School where he learned to read and write. He went to school for about seven years and during the holidays, he was free to hunt and gather with his family.

As well as learning the lore and ways of hunting, Dick learned to ride, muster and dip cattle on a cattle station and later learned the art of the able seaman, as deckhand on a supply boat, “Cora”.

Dick was interested in painting and had the opportunity of watching bark painters at work when the “Cora” visited the different Gulf missions.

In 1946 Dick married Labumore (Elsie), another member of the Lardil tribe, and as his family grew he decided to work at home making and selling boomerangs and other Aboriginal artefacts. Dick’s interest in art grew and his opportunity for recognition came in 1962 when, working as a yardsman at a fishing lodge, he met Percy Trezise, who was working as an airline pilot at the time. They became life-long friends and fellow artists. Dick asked Percy to teach him how to paint in oils and acrylics in the western manner.

They had many joint exhibitions in the western style of painting, and over the next five years Dick exhibited and sold his bark paintings from Mornington Island to Cairns, Brisbane and Canberra.

Dick became active in Federal Aboriginal politics from 1969 to the late 1970s and as the first Chairman of the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council, he travelled widely, taking aboriginal art and craft around the world.

In 1978 he was awarded an O.B.E.

Dick Roughsey died in October 1985 after a long illness, He has now travelled to his Dreaming—Yili-jilit-nyea—but his stories and his autobiography **MOON AND RAINBOW** remain here to be shared by everyone.

## ABOUT PERCY TREZISE

While Dick Roughsey was playing, hunting and gathering as a young child in the far north of Australia, another young boy was exploring his bush home in the south of the country. Percy Trezise was born in Tallangatta in northern Victoria and spent many childhood days hunting and fishing along the Murray River.

He went to a bush school and then on to Albury High School. It was there in 1938 that Percy won a copy of Ian Findlayson's book, **RED CENTRE**. It was this book that triggered Percy's lifelong interest in the Aboriginal people, their customs and tribal lore.

Percy has tried his hand at many activities and occupations throughout his life: athletics, dairy farming, professional bike riding, aeroplane flying, writing, painting and fighting to save parts of Australia's natural beauty.

In 1956 Percy, his wife and children moved to Cairns in Queensland where Percy continued to work for the Australian National Airways. His job as an airline pilot was now incorporated into his new interest—exploring and recording the huge galleries of Aboriginal rock art located in the rugged sandstone ranges of southeast Cape York. Percy wrote a book about his exploration with Dick and his other companions in the Cape York country—**QUINKAN COUNTRY** (1969).

Since Dick's death in 1985 Percy has continued their important work with the publication of:

**NGALCULLI THE RED KANGAROO** (1986)

**PLATYPUS & KOOKABURRA** (1987) by Rex Ingamells and illustrated by Percy Trezise and Mary Haginikitas.

## BACKGROUND TO THE BOOKS

The inspiration for the stories told by Percy Trezise and Dick Roughsey comes from the cave paintings they found in Cape York. These magnificent paintings are in an area around Laura called 'Quinkin (spirit) Country', but until 20 years ago, almost no-one knew the paintings were there.

It was the accidental discovery by a road building crew that brought a few paintings to Percy's attention. The paintings were of a very high standard and Percy's immediate hunch was that there would be more paintings in the area. As he was a pilot, he began looking from the air for rocky outcrops where more such paintings might be found.

And he was right—there were more—hundreds more.

Over the next few years, Percy and Dick uncovered and documented hundreds of paintings. But the question for them remained: what did the painting mean?

Percy realised that the only way to he could find out anything about the paintings was to talk to old Aboriginal men in and around the little town of Laura. However, the old men would not talk to Percy—but they did talk to Dick.

"...Dick was the key to unlocking the mystery, He was the one that got the old men to tell us all the wonderful stories around the campfire at night..."

The old men who were the last survivors of the tribes of the area, were concerned that the stories might die with them, and so "...it was there that we promised them that we'd keep these stories going by publishing them in books so they'd be available to all the children of Australia." During the course of Dick's lifetime, they produced eight books for children. They set as their goal the preservation of Aboriginal mythology by making it part of folklore, striving also to raise the general standard of children's books.

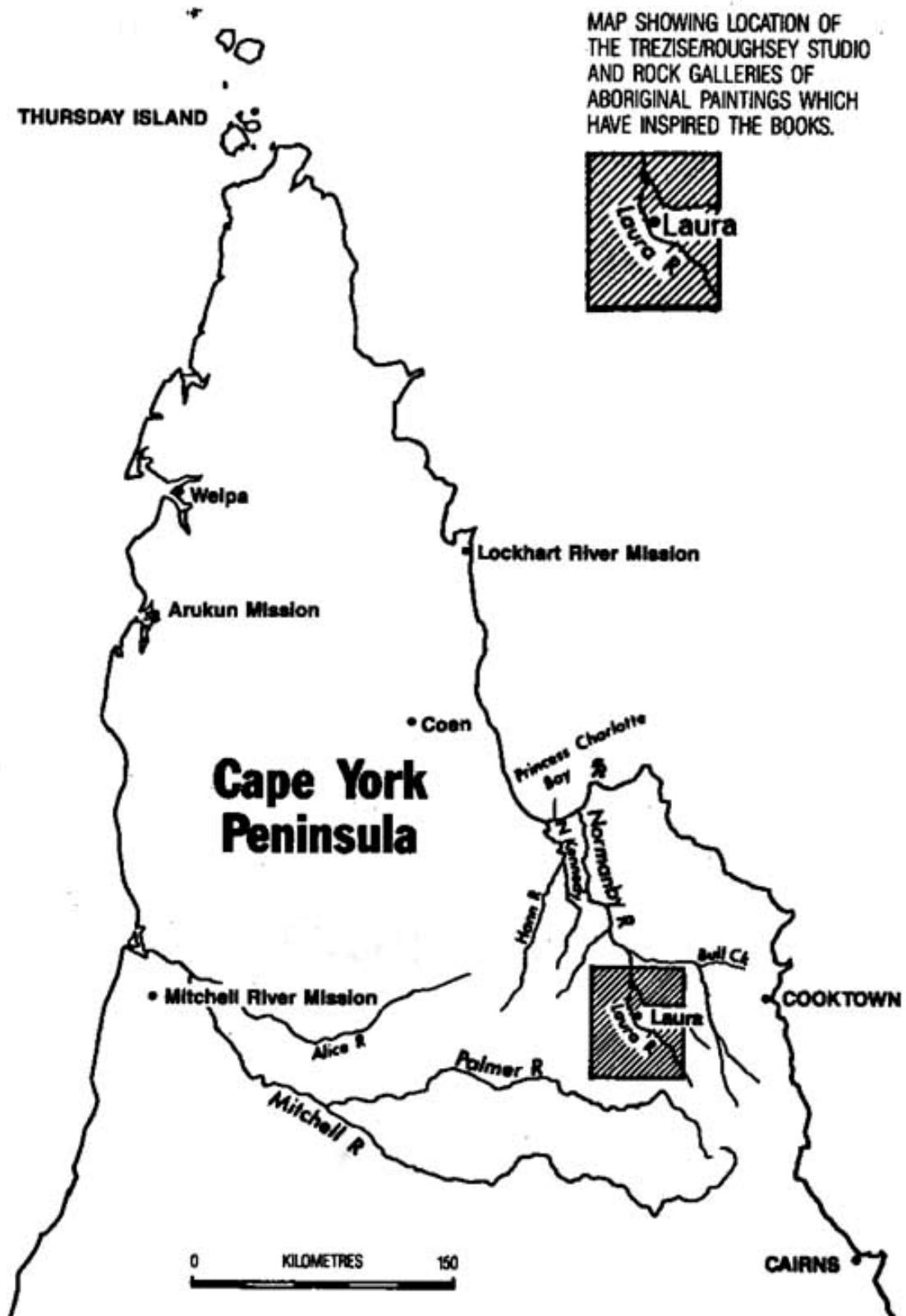
Two of their books—**THE RAINBOW SERPENT** and **THE QUINKINS** won the *Australian Picture Book of the Year Award* in 1976 and 1979 respectively.

## ON MAKING A PICTURE BOOK

After choosing a story, Dick and Percy would divide it into 14 parts. They would write a description of each scene and then do 14 paintings.

"...I used to do the landscapes...and Dick used to put in the figures in. He was terrific at doing Aboriginal figures, especially action figures."

On completion of the paintings and the text the 14 pages were sent to the publishers in Sydney. If the editor, Annie Ingram, decided that changes had to be made, she would write comments on photocopies of the pages. The work would then be sent back to Percy and Dick for alteration.



# SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

In this DVD, Percy Trezise talks about his teamwork with his Aboriginal friend Dick Roughsey and how they came to record some of the Dreamtime stories of the Cape York Aborigines.

Before discussing the DVD with their students, teachers should familiarise themselves with:

- a) the Aboriginal concept of Dreamtime (see Teacher's reference) and
- b) the area of Australia from which these particular Dreamtime stories originate (see sketch map on previous page)

The DVD can be used to understand the work of Percy Trezise and Dick Roughsey and also how a picture book is made. It is suggested that the teacher play and replay the entire DVD and/or select sections to enable students to focus on the different aspects:

- The story of Turramulli (interspersed)
- The journey to the caves of the Cape York Peninsula
- How the cave paintings were found originally
- The stories the old Aboriginal men told about the different drawings
- How Percy and Dick made the books together
- How the books are published

The suggested activities which follow can be selected or tutored to meet the needs of the individual children or class groups.

## DVD VIEWING

1. Find the Cape York Peninsula on a map of Australia. What do you find out about this area from the DVD? See if you can find out additional information from reference books or the internet.
2. In the DVD we are told most of the story **TURRAMULLI THE GIANT QUINKIN**
  - What do we learn about the Yalanji people?
  - What was the importance of the cave paintings to the Yalanji people?
  - Who are the Quinkins? Turramuli?
  - Do you think **TURRAMULLI THE GIANT QUINKIN** is a scary story? Why? Why not?
3. Percy Trezise and Dick Roughsey come from different cultures and from different parts of Australia, and yet we see in the DVD that they worked together as a team. What special skills did each of them have which helped them to locate and eventually record the stories of the Dreamtime?
4. What would be some of the difficulties associated with making a picture book? Consider this question from two points of view:
  - a) Working alone
  - b) Working with another person. How important do you think an editor is in the production of a book?

## BRANCHING INTO BOOKS

1. Look carefully at pictures and descriptions of the Quinkins in **THE QUINKINS** and **TURRAMULLI THE GIANT QUINKIN**. What special characteristics do these spirits have? How do these characteristics enable them to act?
2. Turramulli was the most dangerous of all the Quinkins. Why? How does Dick make Turramulli look dangerous and frightening in the pictures?

3. In **THE RAINBOW SERPENT** and **THE GIANT DEVIL-DINGO** two huge creatures were responsible for shaping parts of the Cape York Peninsula during the Dreamtime. How did they do this and what features did they create? Read and look carefully at other books by Percy and Dick. Make a list of the different land forms and living things which are created in these stories. Which is your favourite story? Why?
4. Many of the Dreamtime stories seem frightening and even horrific. Why do you think this is so? Will children will enjoy them because of this? Why? Why not?
5. Examine the layout of picture and text in Dick and Percy's books. Is it the same? Why do you think Dick and Percy chose to set their books out in the way they did? Is it successful? Why? Why not? Would you make any changes to their layout? How?
6. Read some myths and legends from other countries. Choose two favourite stories. What do you learn about the people and their country from **THEIR** stories?

## MAKING STORIES

1. Percy relates how he and Dick originally had different ideas on how to portray Turramulli going past the log where Moonbi and Leelain were hiding. Eventually Dick said  
“...Put those two hairy legs going past the log...”  
Look again at this picture:
  - Is it a good way to portray this scene? Why? Why not?
  - How would you have done this picture? Have a go.
2. Dick and Percy used the Quinkins as the basis for some of their stories. Can you think of stories by other authors where the same character or group of characters appear in more than one story? Try writing a sequel to one of these stories using the same character/characters.
3. Choose a double-page spread from any picture book in your library or classroom. Pretend you are an editor and make any changes YOU think necessary to improve:
  - a. the illustration
  - b. the text

(You could photocopy the pages and write notes ON the photocopy OR you could make notes on separate sheets of paper.)
4. Percy and Dick took the inspiration for their stories from cave paintings they found. Do some of your own investigations and find an object, a picture or even a person with an interesting story “behind” it (or him/ her) Record and tell your story to the class.
5. Storytelling is a real art and so is REMEMBERING those stories. Individually, or in groups, tell 3 different stories (which you have made up).  
STORY 1—Use no pictures or text in your telling  
STORY 2—Use illustrations to accompany your telling  
STORY 3—Write out and illustrate this story and have your teacher make copies for the class so they can follow as you READ it to them.  
In three months time (or a longer/shorter time) which is the story that is remembered best? Why?
6. The old men were able to tell Percy and Dick many stories about the Dreamtime—stories they had been told by their fathers before them. This tradition of handing down stories is a way of learning about past generations. Talk to an elderly person you know and see what you can learn from them.  
Write down their story and illustrate it—perhaps make a small book—and share it with others.
7. Individually, or in pairs write and illustrate a picture book. Remember these features:
  - a) 14 double pages
  - b) Make the text fit the illustrations

c) Ask your teacher or another student to edit your work with you, before you write your final draft.

8. Choose any well known tale. Divide the story into 14 scenes and illustrate each one. Write your own version of the story by joining a few lines of text to each illustration. Which do you think is more important in a picture book—the text or the pictures? Why?

# **PERCY TREZISE & DICK ROUGHSEY'S BOOKS**

**The Giant Devil-Dingo  
The Rainbow Serpent  
The Quinkins  
Banana Bird and the Snakeman  
Turramulli the Giant Quinkin  
The Magic Firesticks  
Gidja the Moon  
The Flying Fox Warriors**

## **ALSO BY DICK ROUGHSEY**

**The Turkey and the Emu – by Dick and Elsie Roughsey  
Moon and Rainbow – The Autobiography of an Aboriginal**

## **ALSO BY PERCY TREZISE**

**Quinkin Country – Adventures in Search of Aboriginal Cave Paintings in Cape York  
Ngalculli the Red Kangaroo  
Platypus and Kookaburra – by Rex Ingamells, illustrated by Percy Trezise and Mary Haginkitas**

# **TEACHERS REFERENCE**

**Australian Dreaming: 40,000 Years of Aboriginal History** – edited by Jennifer Isaacs (Landsdowne, 1980)  
**Archaeology of the Dreamtime** – by Dr Josephine Flood (William Collins, 1983)

# **NFSA TEACHERS' NOTES**

## **Storymakers: Dick Roughsey and Percy Trezise**

Producer: Janet Bell  
Director: Karl McPhee  
Executive Producer: Janet Bell  
Year: 1987 | Duration: 17 minutes  
Study Guide writer: Jane Bitcon  
Consultant to the series: Ursula Kolbe

For information about the Film Australia Collection programs contact:

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