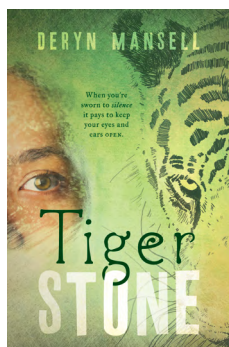




# Walker Books Classroom Ideas



## Tiger Stone

Deryn Mansell  
 ISBN: 9781742032399  
 ARRP: \$16.95  
 NZRRP: \$18.99  
 August 2014

### Outline:

*Tiger eyes, tiger spirit, tiger stone. Only a daughter could unlock the stone's power.*

Java, fourteenth century. The villagers are fearful of Mbah Merapi, the rumbling volcano that overshadows their lives. Kancil, the lowliest kitchen servant, knows the real danger is human but is fatherless and mute – and she will lose everything if her identity is revealed. How can Kancil warn the villagers of the danger they are in?

### Author/Illustrator Information:

Deryn Mansell has been fascinated by the history of Java ever since she visited Yogyakarta as a seventeen year old and experienced first-hand the majestic Prambanan and Borobudur temples. That visit motivated her to continue studying Indonesian and she has returned to Java many times since as a student, as a teacher and as a traveller. In her working life, Deryn has been a teacher of Indonesian in Australia, a teacher of English in Indonesia, a researcher of language and intercultural communication and a coordinator of Asia literate business-people volunteering in Australian schools. *Tiger Stone* is her first book.

### How to use these notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

|   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <b>These notes are for:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary year 6</li> <li>• Secondary years 7-8</li> <li>• Ages 11+</li> </ul> | <b>Key Learning Areas:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English</li> <li>• History</li> <li>• Geography</li> </ul> | <b>Example of:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Novel</li> <li>• Historical fiction</li> </ul> | <b>Themes/ Ideas:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fantasy</li> <li>• Disability</li> <li>• Language</li> <li>• Relationships               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Death</li> <li>• Family</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
|---|--|--|---|

| National Curriculum Focus:*   |           |           |                   |                     |                  |   |          |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|---|----------|
| Content descriptions include: |           |           |                   |                     |                  |   |          |
| English<br>Year 6             | Year 7    | Year 8    | History<br>Year 6 | Geography<br>Year 6 | Year 7<br>Year 6 | *Key content descriptions have been identified from the Australian National Curriculum. However, this is not an exhaustive list of National Curriculum content able to be addressed through studying this text. |          |
| ACELA1518                     | ACELA1529 | ACELA1547 | ACHHS117          | ACHGK031            | ACHGS043         |   | ACHGK046 |
| ACELA1524                     | ACELA1539 | ACELT1626 | ACHHS120          | ACHGK032            | ACHGS044         |   | ACHGS047 |
| ACELA1526                     | ACELT1619 | ACELT1807 | ACHHS121          | ACHGK033            |                  |   | ACHGS049 |
| ACELT1613                     | ACELT1621 | ACELY1732 | ACHHS122          | ACHGK035            |                  |   |          |
| ACELY1711                     | ACELT1622 | ACELY1733 | ACHHS123          | ACHGK036            |                  |   | Year 8   |
| ACELY1712                     | ACELY1721 | ACELY1734 |                   | ACHGS040            |                  |   | ACHGK054 |
|                               |           |           |                   | ACHGS041            |                  |   | ACHGS055 |
|                               |           |           |                   | ACHGS042            |                  |   |          |

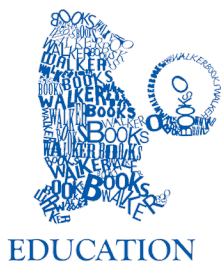
\*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

Walker Books Australia  
 Locked Bag 22  
 Newtown, N.S.W., 2042

Ph +61 2 9517 9577  
 Fax +61 2 9517 9997

These notes were created by Steve Spargo.  
 For enquiries please contact:  
 educationwba@walkerbooks.com.au

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## Deryn Mansell on *Tiger Stone*

I wanted to write a story set in Indonesia before the arrival of Europeans. Indonesia has an intriguing history but we tend to focus on the ancient temples then jump forward several centuries to the arrival of Europeans and the spice trade because not very much is known about what happened in the intervening years. I also wanted my story to be about the power of knowing other languages.

My inspiration for the main character, Kancil, came from the girls at the boarding house where I lived as a university student in Yogyakarta. The girls came from all over Indonesia and would use Indonesian when speaking with each other, Javanese when bargaining in the market and their own regional languages when phoning home. I always admired the ease with which they switched from one language to another although they would often put themselves down because their English wasn't perfect.



Choosing names for my characters was tricky because there are no records of what ordinary people called each other in 14th-century Java. Kitchen Boy was always Kitchen Boy but Kancil's name changed several times. I finally settled on Kancil because of the association with the mouse deer that outsmarts the bigger animals in the Kancil fables. I like the fact that the origin of the Kancil fables is claimed by both Indonesia and Malaysia—neither country has won the argument. It goes to show that stories can't be contained by national borders. If you read a Kancil story in Malay or Indonesian you can't tell whether the character is male or female because "she" and "he" is the same word, yet in English translation, Kancil is usually male. I decided I would call a female character "Kancil" to challenge that assumption.

When I read about the Wonoboyo Hoard, I knew I wanted to incorporate it into my story. This treasure trove was uncovered in a rice field in 1990. Historians believe the treasure probably came from the Prambanan temples but nobody knows when it was buried or why. I couldn't resist the opportunity to create a backstory for it.

## Discussion Questions and Activities

### English

#### Before Reading

View the cover and title and identify the following:

- The title of the book
- The author
- The publisher
- The blurb

Read the blurb on the back cover. What is the purpose of a blurb? What does this blurb tell you about the story? View some book covers on the internet or in your school library (without reading the description) and write a blurb for them.

Examine the front and back cover of the book, taking note of the colours, imagery, title font, and tag line. Answer the following questions:

- Where do you think this book is set?
- What do you know about the main character?
- What genre do you think this book is?
- Is this fiction or non-fiction? How can you tell?
- Some of the girl's face is covered. Why is this significant?

Revisit your answers to these questions when you have finished reading the book. Were your predictions correct? Do you think the cover was appropriate for this book? How would you have designed it differently to fit your

interpretation of the book?

Examine the structure and features of the book. Identify the following:

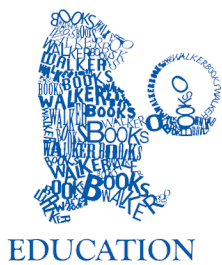
- Chapter headings
- Title page
- Dedication
- Page numbers
- Paragraphs
- Quotation marks

#### Exploring the Story

What are the themes in *Tiger Stone*? Write a statement of belief for each theme, then assess how *Tiger Stone's* treatment of these themes makes you feel.

Use the list of characters on pages 8-9 to draw a character map. Write each name on a large sheet of paper and draw lines between each character describing their relationship, how their relationship changes/grows during the novel and what causes the change.

Kancil and her mother are taken in by their family as servants, where their only purpose is to serve their masters. By becoming servants, they lose their freedom. What does it mean to be free? Write a story, newspaper article or



# Walker Books Classroom Ideas

speech about what it means to be free. Why is freedom important? Why should it not be taken for granted?

A key theme in *Tiger Stone* is how your family/past shapes your identity. Discuss how Kancil and Kitchen Boy's pasts affect their lives and how others treat them. How does your past shape who you are? Think about your cultural heritage, your family, education and major events that have happened in your life.

There are several groups of characters that speak different dialects in *Tiger Stone*. How does the speaking of the different dialects – the regional dialects, the formal dialect, the thieves' dialect – effect the action of the story? How do the characters respond to hearing each of the dialects? Also, Kancil is forced not to speak at all to most of the characters. How does she communicate with other characters, given that she cannot speak? As a class, brainstorm a list of communication methods you can use to communicate with someone who doesn't speak the same language as you (consider methods available during the fourteenth century and those available in modern times).

While Kancil is pretending to be mute, Kitchen Boy is the only person besides Mother that Kancil can talk to. How important is it to have a friend to share experiences with?

Ibu Thani took Kitchen Boy in as a servant after Ibu Jamu found him in the forest, and he was never given a proper name. What does this say about how Ibu Thani and her family feel about Kitchen Boy and the other servants? How does that make you feel? Do you think having a proper name is important? Why?

There are a number of characters in *Tiger Stone* who are prejudiced against people that are different. What does prejudice mean? What are the dangers of having prejudiced opinions of certain people/cultures? Find examples of prejudiced behaviour in the book.

Kancil and the prince share an enemy (King Hayam Wuruk), though they dislike the king for very different reasons. How has the king affected their lives? How do they each respond to this?

The author has included many Indonesian words throughout the novel. Why do you think she has chosen to do this? How would the book be different if she had used English translations instead of the Indonesian word?

## History

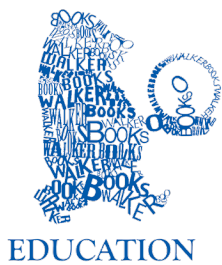
What food do the people of Prambanan eat? How does this food compare to what you usually eat? Take a class survey of what food each student usually has for dinner to see what is the most common.

*Tiger Stone* is set in the fourteenth century. Working in small groups, choose another part of the world and research what life was like there at that time. For instance, England, Greece or Egypt. Some topics to consider include:

- Social structure (Who had power? What different social classes or groups were there? Was there a formal government or ruler?)
- Relationships with other countries or groups (Were there wars? Did they trade? Did they travel much to other areas?)
- Diet/food
- Dress and hairstyles
- Transportation (How did people move about?)
- Work (How did people survive? What jobs did they do?)
- Houses/living arrangements
- The roles of women
- Health.

Answer these same questions for Java during this period and prepare a PowerPoint presentation comparing your findings.

The island of Java is in the modern day Republic of Indonesia. "Indonesia" is not mentioned in this book because it is set in the fourteenth century, long before the concept of "Indonesia" emerged. Create a timeline of historical events in Java from the ninth century to modern day. What major events occurred? What changes did these events cause?



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## Geography

Discuss the following questions as a class:

- How is learning about history from a novel different to learning about it from a nonfiction text such as an encyclopaedia or reference book? Which do you prefer to read? Which do you think would be more reliable as a source of information? Explain your answer.
- In your opinion, is it more important for an author to observe strict historical accuracy or to tell gripping stories that will captivate readers?
- What is meant by the term “artistic license”? To what extent do you think authors have the right to use artistic license when writing about people and events for which there is no historical record?
- Is it possible to ever present history accurately? Or when we write about it are we always transforming it by putting our own biased interpretation on it?

The Wonoboyo hoard is a significant archaeological find in Indonesia. Research the Wonoboyo hoard in your school library or online and write a report on what was found, when it was dated and what information about ancient Java can be gleaned from it. How does this relate to *Tiger Stone*? Do you think the author was influenced by this treasure when writing the book? The workers who uncovered the hoard reported it, rather than selling it. What does this indicate about the value of the artefacts? What would you do if you uncovered an ancient artefact?

Compare the map at the start of the book with a modern-day map of Java. Can you locate the towns labelled on the map in the book on this modern-day map? What is the modern-day capital of Java?

Has anyone in your class ever lived in or visited Java? If so, have them share their experiences with the class. Discuss the way Java today is different from the period Mansell describes in the novel.

Use the Australian Bureau of Statistics ([www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)) to discover what percentage of Australia’s population were born in Indonesia. What influence do you think this group has had on Australia’s culture?

Describe the landscape of Java based on the author’s description and your own research taking note of climate, vegetation and key landforms. How did the landscape affect the way the people of Java lived during the fourteenth century?

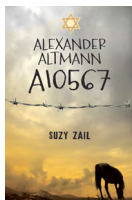
“Kancil took a breath and looked up at the mountain, Mbah Merapi, the volcano that brought both life and death to the Mataram lands.” (Page 24)

How does the volcano bring both life and death? What do the characters in *Tiger Stone* believe causes the volcano to erupt? Compare these beliefs with modern scientific understanding of volcanos.

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