

TEACHER NOTES

Teacher  
Notes

OUR COUNTRY

# ANCIENT WONDERS

MARK GREENWOOD  
& FRANÉ LESSAC

WALKER & BOOKS





# OUR COUNTRY ANCIENT WONDERS

**These notes are for:** Ages 7-12, Years 1-6.

**Key learning areas:** History, English, Geography, Language and Literacy, Visual literacy, Science

**Example of:** Picture book, Non-fiction

**Themes:**

- Geology
- Geography
- Australian Environment
- Natural Wonders
- Science

*Our home is an ancient land. In every corner of Australia, wonders are waiting for curious explorers.*

With each vibrant fact-filled page of this unique book, readers will visit different natural wonders across all states and territories. See the prehistoric beasts that roamed the land in Winton, venture through the lava-formed caves at Undara, experience the fiery glow of Uluru and Kata Tjuta, and more!

*Adventure is out there . . . Our country is calling.*

## MARK GREENWOOD

Mark Greenwood is a history hunter. His award-winning books include *The Legend of Lasseter's Reef* and *The Legend of Moondyne Joe*, both winners of the West Australian Premier's Book Award. Mark often teams with his wife, illustrator Frané Lessac, to produce titles such as *Midnight* – the story of a light horse, *Ned Kelly & The Green Sash* and *Simpson and His Donkey*, a CBCA Honour Book and a USBY Outstanding International Book. *Jandamarra*, illustrated by Terry Denton, was shortlisted for the CBCA Eve Pownall Award, the NSW Premier's Literary Awards Patricia Wrightson Prize for Children's Literature and the West Australian Young Readers' Book Awards. *The Happiness Box*, illustrated by Andrew McLean, was a 2019 CBCA Honour book.

**"THE AIM OF OUR COUNTRY – ANCIENT WONDERS IS TO UNITE US ALL IN A SHARED LOVE OF OUR HOME, OUR COUNTRY, AND TO INTRODUCE CURIOUS EXPLORERS TO SOME OF AUSTRALIA'S MOST REMARKABLE NATURAL TREASURES."**

——— Mark Greenwood



## FRANÉ LESSAC

Frané Lessac is an author and illustrator of international renown, having fifty children's books published throughout the world. She was born in the USA and lived on the Caribbean island of Montserrat, as well as in London, before moving to Australia. Frané loves to travel and create books based on her worldwide journeys. She has contributed her distinctive paintings to many critically acclaimed children's picture books including, *A is for Australia*, *Under the Southern Cross*, *Australia Under the Sea 1,2 3*, and *A is for Australian Animals*. *We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga*, written by Traci Sorell, was awarded the Robert F. Sibert Honor Book Honor medal, the Orbis Pictus Honor Book medal, the Boston Globe Horn Book Honor medal and the American Indian Library Association Honor Award.

**"OUR COUNTRY – ANCIENT WONDERS IS A VISUAL FEAST THAT TAKES READERS ON A JOURNEY TO THE BACK-OF-BEYOND IN AN ENTERTAINING AND INFORMATIVE WAY, EXPLORING OUT OF THE ORDINARY WONDERS SCATTERED ACROSS OUR ANCIENT LAND."**

——— Frané Lessac

## BEFORE READING

Before reading *Our Country: Ancient Wonders*, view the front and back cover of the book. Identify the following:

- Title
- Author and illustrator
- Publisher
- Blurb

Based on the cover, what do you think this book is about? Do you think it is fiction (imaginative) or nonfiction (informative)? What clues are there to support what you think? Or could this book be a combination of both, sometimes called creative nonfiction?

## EXPLORING THE TEXT

Is *Our Country: Ancient Wonders* an imaginative, informative or persuasive text? Is it a combination of more than one of these types of texts? How can you tell?

Mark Greenwood's text in this book is presented in three styles. Identify the formats. Why do you think the book is designed this way, and how did it affect you as a reader? Read the book using each format separately and then discuss how the different formats change your reading of the book. Which writing style do you prefer: the descriptive storytelling style, the informative factual style or the poetic refrain? In what types of texts would each of these writing styles usually be used? For example: novels, short stories, poetry collections, newspaper articles and reference books.

Why do you think author Mark Greenwood chose to include a poetic refrain on each

spread? How do they add affect your reading experience? Choose three spreads from the book write your own alternative refrain for each, making sure to include the words 'our country'.

*Our Country: Ancient Wonders* includes a glossary at the back of the book. What is the purpose of a glossary? How do you use it? In what kind of books would you normally find a glossary? Using the glossary as a starting point, collect any other words from the book that you don't know the meaning of and create an *Our Country: Ancient Wonders* dictionary. You can also collect words and phrases from any further research to add to your dictionary. Illustrate some of the entries to help further explain

## EXPLORING THE ILLUSTRATIONS

Choose two wonders from the book and compare the landscapes. How are they similar and how are they different, and how has illustrator Frané Lessac used colour to show this?

What colours are particularly emphasised on each page? Why do you think Frané Lessac chose to make that colour prominent? What might it tell you about the part of Australia where that wonder is located?

What research might Frané Lessac have done in preparation for illustrating this book? Imagine you were an illustrator given the job of illustrating this book. Make a list of all the things you think you'd do to complete your task.

Frané Lessac's images are created in gouache. Discuss the artist's choice of mediums with students and encourage them to create a picture in the same style and an illustration using a different medium.



## FURTHER ACTIVITIES

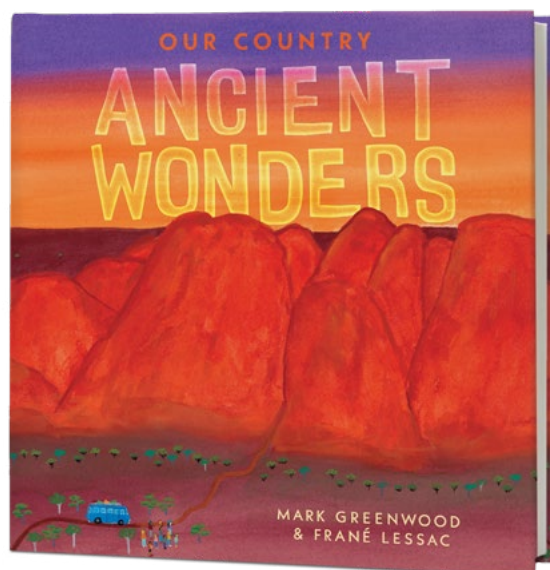
Many of the wonders in *Our Country: Ancient Wonders* are sacred places to our First Nations people. Do some research to find out the traditional owners of the land each of the wonders can be found on. Who are the traditional owners of the area your school is in?

Have you been to any of the wonders in *Our Country: Ancient Wonders*? Share your impressions about the wonder you visited with the class. Make sure to include any other facts or information you might have learnt while you were there!

What is your favourite wonder in *Our Country: Ancient Wonders*, and why did you choose it? Had you heard of it before reading the book, and what new things did you learn about it? Compile a list of questions that you could ask to find out more about the ancient wonder you chose. Where do you think you could find this information? Use this list of questions to research the ancient wonder and present your findings in a multimedia presentation or a poster. Show where you can find this wonder on a map of Australia and include images and text that give the reader more information than they can find in the book.

Using everything you've learnt about your favourite ancient wonder and where it is, imagine you're planning a trip to go and visit. What would you pack, who would you travel with, and how would you get there? Plan two different possible journeys you could take, and get creative with your transportation! Could you travel part of the way by helicopter, by horseback, by sea, by rail, by road? Write a travelogue journal entry of the journey filled with illustrations and entertaining descriptions of what you saw, heard and thought along the way.

Now imagine you've made it to your favourite ancient



wonder: what ways can you make sure your visit is respectful to the environment? Make a list of three things you can do on your visit to ensure the site remains as beautiful for future generations. Design and write a postcard to a classmate about your experience.

Write a poem about any of the wonders mentioned in these books. You could write a haiku, acrostic or free verse poem using the words and illustrations in the book for inspiration. Illustrate your poems and bind them together to create a unique book of Australian poetry.

Throughout the book, we follow the same group of curious explorers. Choose one of them, and write a short story from their perspective about visiting one of the wonders. You may choose to use any interesting facts you've learnt about that location as a story starter.

Design a tourism poster or flyer that uses persuasive techniques to encourage people from overseas to visit Australia. Use facts and locations about the wonders from the book to help you come up with some persuasive elements to include in your poster or flyer. In small groups, find other books about Australia in your school library. Compare these books with *Our*

*Country: Ancient Wonders* and discuss what is similar and what is different about the books. Give a short presentation to the class on how the authors/illustrators deal with the subject of Australia differently.

Research the author and illustrator. What other books have Mark and Frané written or illustrated, together or individually? Which of these books can you find in your school library? Choose your favourite and present it to the class using persuasive language to encourage others to read it. Read more about Mark Greenwood at [www.markgreenwood.com.au](http://www.markgreenwood.com.au) and Frané Lessac at [www.franelessac.com](http://www.franelessac.com).

Write a book review on *Our Country: Ancient Wonders*. Write what you liked about the book and if you think the author and illustrator did a good job of conveying information in an interesting way. Mention any books that are similar to *Our Country: Ancient Wonders* and make a recommendation as to who you think will like this book.

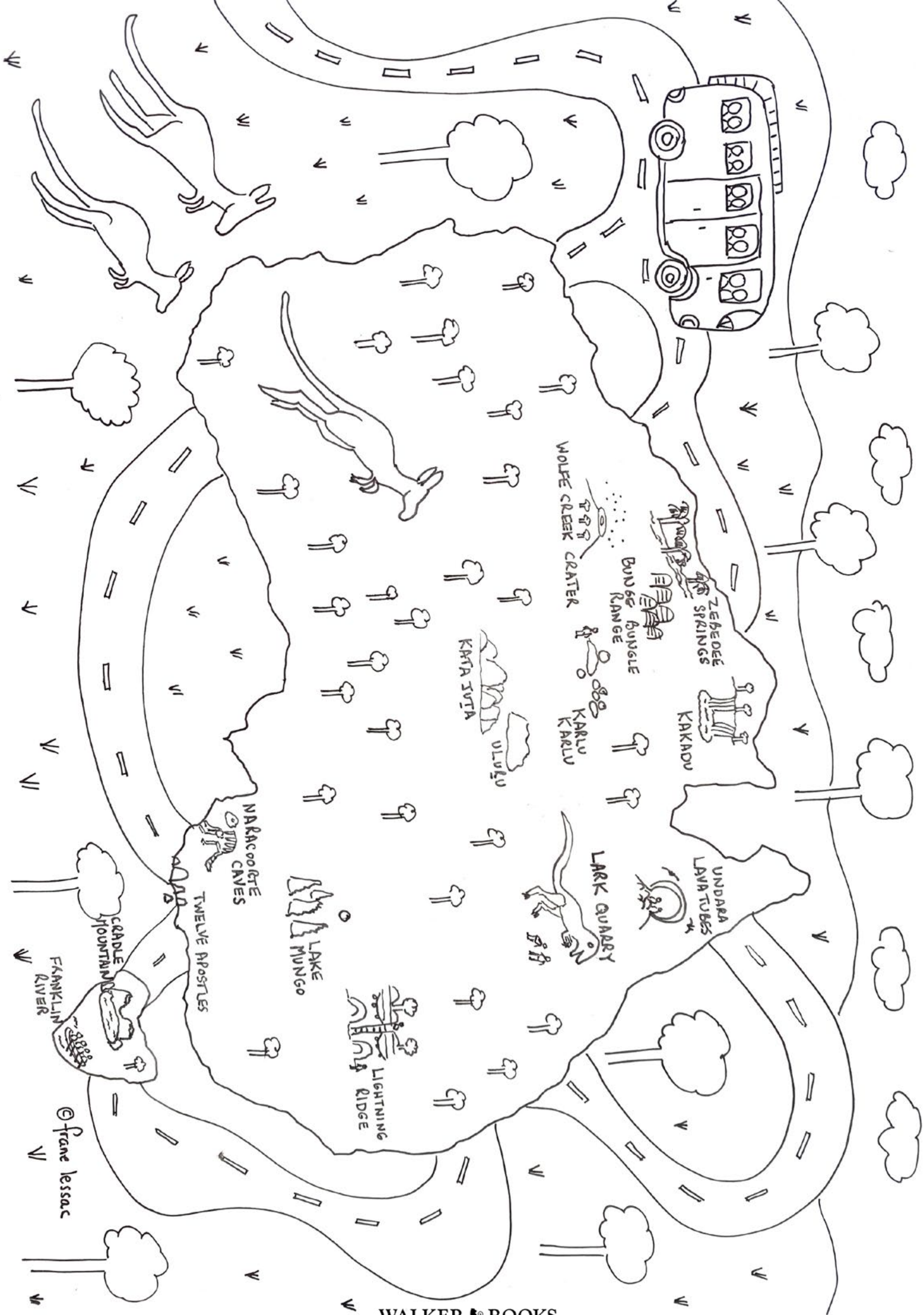
While the book covers plenty of ancient wonders, there are always more to explore and learn about! The map at the end of the book includes extra places, including the Three Sisters, Wave Rock, Mossman Gorge and more! Choose one of the 'More to Explore' Wonders (or even add another wonder you think of yourself) and using your research skills, create an extra spread about

your chosen wonder. You can draw your art for the page however you'd like, and be sure to include text in each of the three styles from the book.

*Our Country: Ancient Wonders* is a fantastic resource to use as a springboard to discuss and research more about Australian environment and geology. Here are some other topics your class could explore:

- What does the term 'megafauna' mean? What megafauna were once found in Australia, and what caused their extinction?
- What kind of dinosaurs once roamed Australia? Where else in Australia are dinosaur footprints found?
- Where else in Australia is there evidence of volcanos?
- Beside Lightning Ridge, where else are opals found? What other gemstones are found in Australia, and where?
- Beside Wolfe Creek, where else are meteorite craters found in Australia?





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