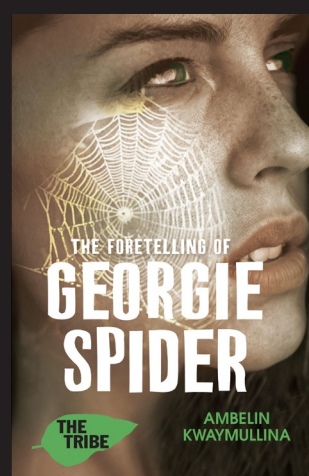
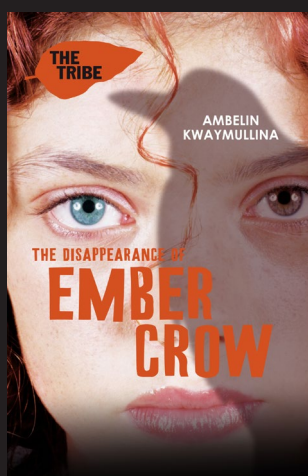
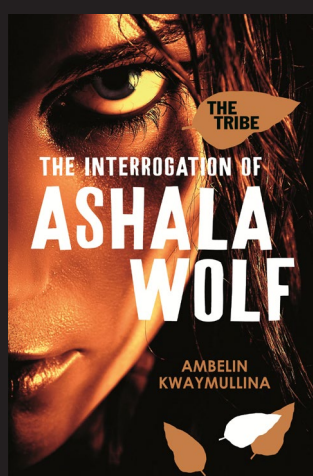




THE TRIBE

AMBELIN
KWAYMULLINA



EDUCATION RESOURCE BOOKLET

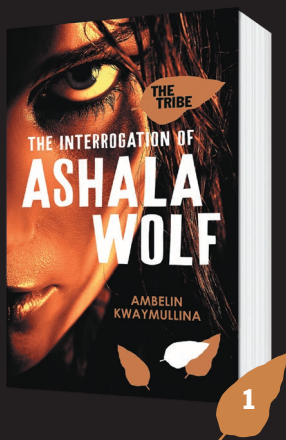
Classroom ideas by
ROBYN SHEAHAN-BRIGHT



WALKER  BOOKS

CONTENTS

3	ABOUT
4	THE CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE TRIBE SERIES
6	INTRODUCTION TO THE TRIBE
8	A. CRITICAL LITERACY – BEFORE AND AFTER READING THE SERIES
8	B. THEMES AND CURRICULUM TOPICS
8	Dystopian Future Society
9	Treatment of, and Detention of Refugees
9	Violent or Non-Violent Participation in Rebellious or Dissent
9	Indigenous History, Cultural Influence and Beliefs
9	Difference
10	Friendship and Peer Group Pressure
10	Leadership
10	Rite of Passage into Adulthood and Individuality
10	Survival and Endurance
10	Ability and Power
11	Guilt and Forgiveness
11	Love
11	Environmental Harmony Versus Destruction
12	Memory
12	Morality
12	Death, Grief and Redemption
12	C. ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERACY
12	Plot and Structure
13	Characters
13	Voice, Style and Use of Language
14	Setting
15	Genre
16	Writing Exercises
16	Quotes for Discussion
16	Further Reading Ideas for Class Discussion
17	D. VISUAL LITERACY ACTIVITIES
17	E. FURTHER IDEAS USING TECHNOLOGY
17	CONCLUSION
17	BIBLIOGRAPHY
18	WORKSHEETS
18	#1: Comprehension Quiz
18	#2: Story Starters
19	#3: Character Chart

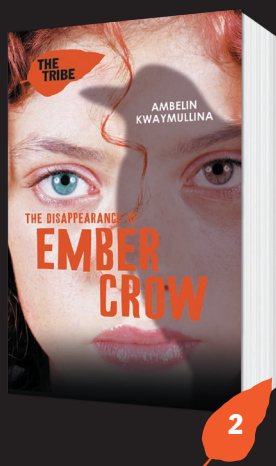


THE INTERROGATION OF ASHALA WOLF

ISBN: 9781921720086 eBook Available

Ashala Wolf has been captured by Chief Administrator Neville Rose. A man who is intent on destroying Ashala's Tribe – the runaway Illegals hiding in the Firstwood. Injured and vulnerable and with her Sleepwalker ability blocked, Ashala is forced to succumb to the machine that will pull secrets from her mind. And right beside her is Justin Connor, her betrayer, watching her every move. Will the Tribe survive the interrogation of Ashala Wolf?

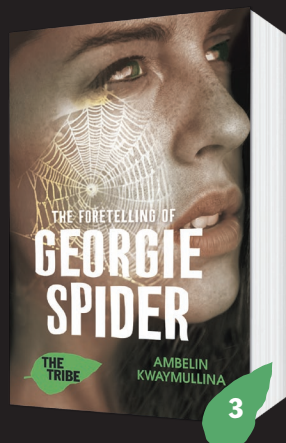
Short-listed in both the Science Fiction
and Young Adult categories of the
2012 Aurealis Awards



THE DISAPPEARANCE OF EMBER CROW

ISBN: 9781921720093 eBook Available

Ember Crow is missing. To find her friend, Ashala Wolf must control her increasingly erratic and dangerous Sleepwalking ability and leave the Firstwood. But Ashala doesn't realise that Ember is harbouring terrible secrets and is trying to shield the Tribe and all Illegals from a devastating new threat – her own past.



THE FORETELLING OF GEORGIE SPIDER

ISBN: 9781921720109 eBook Available

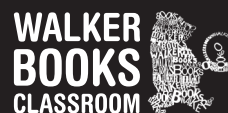
Georgie Spider has foretold the end of the world, and the only one who can stop it is Ashala Wolf. But Georgie has also foreseen Ashala's death. As the world shifts around the Tribe, Ashala fights to protect those she loves from old enemies and new threats. And Georgie fights to save Ashala. Georgie Spider can see the future. But can she change it?



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AUSTRALIA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS

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Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and publishes regularly on children's literature, Australian fiction, and publishing history. She was inaugural director of and is a Life Member of the Queensland Writers Centre, and was co-founder of Jam Roll Press. In 2012 she was recipient of the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Outstanding Services to Children's Literature. In 2014 she received the Queensland Writers' Centre's Johnno Award.

The Cultural and Historical Background to *The Tribe* series: An essay from the author

I am an Aboriginal writer from the Palyku people. The homeland (“Country”) of the Palyku lies in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. Within Australia there are many different Aboriginal Countries, each with their own stories. I am also one of the many Indigenous peoples of the planet. Indigenous peoples are the first inhabitants of lands that are now controlled by others, such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia, the Maori people of New Zealand, and the many Indigenous people of Canada and North America. I am often told that it is unusual for an Indigenous person to write speculative fiction. But worldwide a lot of us are writing what we sometimes call “Indigenous futurisms”. These are stories (whether told in books or in other forms like art) where we use our knowledges, cultures and experiences to imagine the future from an Indigenous perspective.

The Tribe series and Aboriginal culture

The ancient stories of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia tell that the world originated in “the Dreaming”. “Dreaming” is an inexact translation of an Aboriginal concept that has no English equivalent, and the Aboriginal word for Dreaming is different across the many different Aboriginal nations of Australia. In the Dreaming the ancient creation spirits made the world. These spirits came in many forms – such as serpents, birds, trees, moon, and sun – and they often changed their shapes. When their work was done they went back into the world that they had made, and they still live there today. There was not one spirit for all of Australia. Every different Aboriginal Country has its own Dreaming spirits, and the stories of our Countries are the stories of the actions of these beings.

When I wrote the Tribe series I had to consider what would happen if the world ended, torn apart in an environmental cataclysm that I named the Reckoning. The tales of my ancestors told that the ancient creation spirits were strong, and adept at surviving massive change. So it seemed to me that some of these spirits would make it through. That is why, in my story, a great Serpent finds his way out of the chaos and gathers up what seeds of life he can to begin the world anew. I also allow for the possibility that other old spirits from other parts of the planet would survive, like the cat spirit Starbeauty.

Both Grandfather Serpent, and Starbeauty, have a particular way of understanding time that reflects Aboriginal world views. Australian Aboriginal systems (like those of other Indigenous peoples elsewhere in the world) do not have a linear concept of time. Linear time moves from the past to the present and on into the future, and once a moment is past it cannot be accessed again. Non-linear time works differently. There is no “was”, “is” and “will be” (which is why a lot of Indigenous languages don’t have a past, present and future tense). There is only an “is”. All is in the now, and relationships between yourself and everything in the world determine “when” you are. Or as Starbeauty puts it in *The Disappearance of Ember Crow*: “if life is a ball of string, then what is before, and what is after, depends on where in the ball you begin.”

In the Firstwood, Ashala and all of her Tribe have a connection to a particular forest animal whose name they take as their own. For Ashala it is wolves (although the animals called “wolves” in Ashala’s world are far closer to dingoes than European wolves). These animal relationships are drawn from Aboriginal kinship systems which extend beyond human beings to all life in Country (including animals and plants). Aboriginal people also have particular connections to particular animals, sometimes called totems. And Aboriginal people regard animals as having their own wisdom, much of which is not known to human beings. This is why the members of the Tribe have connections to animals that are important in offering them comfort and guidance in times of trouble. The perspective of each animal is of course different – for the wolves, in *The Disappearance of Ember Crow*, the promise of the Pack is to always be there, to defend the Pack or die trying. For the mudlarks, in *The Foretelling of Georgie Spider*, it matters that you sing for whatever time you have on the earth. More can be discovered about other animals of the Firstwood by visiting my website (where you can also work out what animal you would be bonded with in the forest).

The Tribe series and colonialism

In the Tribe books, the Citizenship Accords divide people into three categories: Citizens (those without abilities), Illegals (those with abilities) and Exempts (those who have abilities that are categorised as benign). This law is based upon the Western Australian *Natives (Citizenship Rights) Act 1944*. This Act gave Aboriginal people a limited set of citizenship rights, by “exempting” an Aboriginal person with citizenship from the racially based controls that only applied to them in the first place because they were Aboriginal. One of the main benefits of having “citizenship” was the removal of movement restrictions that made it difficult for Aboriginal people to find work because they were not able to freely move around the State. Many Aboriginal people referred to their citizenship papers as dog licences or dog tags – a licence to be a citizen in a land Aboriginal people had occupied for over sixty thousand years. *The Natives (Citizenship Rights) Act 1944* was repealed in 1971, and it was itself part of a larger suite of legislation that applied to Aboriginal people from the early 1900s until the 1970s and controlled all aspects of Aboriginal existence. Included in this were the laws that created the Stolen Generations – which in Western Australia was the Aborigines Act 1905 and successor legislation.

The Stolen Generations refers to the Indigenous children who were taken from their parents under the laws and policies of Australian State and Federal governments. The Australian Human Rights Commission’s *Bringing Them Home* report estimates that between one in ten and one in three children were forcibly removed from their families and communities in the period spanning 1910–1970. Two generations of my family were taken away, and in writing of a world where children are placed in cold institutions, it was their experiences that I drew upon. During the time of the Stolen Generations, the government kept detailed files on Aboriginal people. My ancestors had files kept on them, and it was of this that I was thinking when I wrote of the government files on Illegals in *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*: The Stolen Generations were a heartbreaking and traumatic experience that continues to affect Aboriginal people across Australia today. In 2008, Prime Minister Rudd apologised to the Stolen Generations in a motion supported by both sides of Parliament.

AMBELIN KWAYMULLINA ON THE TRIBE

The Tribe series and Indigenous futures

My great-grandmother was born around the turn of the century, and like other Aboriginal people of her generation, she lived through some of the cruelest times for Aboriginal peoples in this country. When writing the conclusion to the Tribe series I thought a lot about the power of choice. The men and women of my great-grandmother's generation had virtually all their choices taken from them. Yet within the tiny range of options they had available, so many of them chose to act with kindness and compassion throughout the entirety of lives marked by bitter injustice. And I know that there are many people in the world today, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, who – despite having very few choices – do what they can to make this world a little bit brighter for those around them. Many of these people are also the grandmothers, at least in Indigenous societies. So in imagining an Indigenous future – and in writing the ultimate conclusion to the Tribe series – the future I dreamed of was one where the choices of ordinary people changed the world for the better. I dreamed of a place where the fate of the planet lay not in the hands of the hard-hearted, but in the hands of every person who wanted what in the books is called a true Balance, which is to say, a place where everyone cares for each other and the earth. This was the future my ancestors looked to and which so many did not live to see, and I would like it to be the future we all leave to the next generation of our species.

Essay © 2015 Ambelin Kwaymullina

References/Further Information

About Ambelin Kwaymullina

www.ambelin-kwaymullina.com.au

About Australian Indigenous peoples and cultures

Map of Indigenous Australia

<http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map/>

Information, images and resources on Indigenous peoples, culture, history and rights at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

<http://aiatsis.gov.au/explore>

Indigenous people generally

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

<http://undesadspd.org/IndigenousPeoples.aspx>

The United Nation's State of the World's Indigenous Peoples Report

<http://undesadspd.org/IndigenousPeoples/LibraryDocuments/StateoftheWorldsIndigenousPeoples.aspx>

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples, Who are Indigenous Peoples? Factsheet

http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf

Stolen Generations

The Australian Human Rights Commission Bringing Them Home Education Module

<http://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/education/publications/rightsed-bringing-them-home>

Video testimonies of Stolen Generations survivors

<http://stolengenerationstestimonies.com/>

The Healing Foundation

<http://healingfoundation.org.au/stolen-generations/>

The Apology

<http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/our-country/our-people/apology-to-australias-indigenous-peoples>

Ambelin Kwaymullina

Ambelin comes from the Palyku people of the Pilbara region of Western Australia. When not writing or reading she teaches law, illustrates picture books and hangs out with her dogs. She has previously written a number of children's books, both alone and with other members of her family. Her first novel, *The Tribe Book 1: The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*, was short-listed in both the Science Fiction and Young Adult Fiction categories of the 2012 Aurealis Awards.





INTRODUCTION TO THE TRIBE

“All revolutions begin with a question.” (Bk 2, p 160)

The Tribe is a dystopian series set in a future world in which the earth has been destroyed by “the Reckoning” which happened over three hundred years earlier. This resulted in a strictly regulated society being created in which the Bureau of Citizenship has classified people as Illegals, Citizens or Exempts.

Survivors live in an “ecotopia” (utopia) (dystopia) where they strive to protect the Balance of the world; the inherent harmony between all forms of life.

However, in this world, “difference” is not tolerated, so that anyone born with an “ability” – Firestarters who control fire, Rumlbers who can cause quakes, Boomers who make things explode – is regarded as a threat to the Balance of this newly created society. And any child or teenager found to have such a power is labeled an “Illegal” and locked away in detention centres by the government or eliminated. This is done under a law named the Citizenship Accords which divides people into three categories: Citizens (those without abilities), Illegals (those with abilities) and Exempts (those who have abilities that are judged “benign” enough to be given an Exemption from the Accords). Except for the ones who run ... to join The Tribe.

The series focuses on themes and curriculum topics such as:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Dystopian Future Society | • Survival and Endurance |
| • Violent or Non-Violent Participation in Rebellion or Dissent | • Indigenous Cultural Influences and Beliefs |
| • Death, Grief and Redemption | • Guilt and Forgiveness |
| • Leadership | • Difference |
| • Rite of Passage into Adulthood and Individuality | • Treatment of, and Detention of Refugees |
| • Ability and Power | • Guilt and Forgiveness |
| • Love | • Memory |
| • Environmental Harmony Versus Destruction | • Friendship and Peer Group Pressure |

It might be used in several subjects falling under the key Curriculum Areas:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| • Humanities & Social Science | • English | • Science |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|

It provides a model of several fiction Genres, the conventions of which can be studied, such as:

- | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| • Dystopian Fiction | • Speculative Fiction | • Series Writing |
| • Mystery/Thriller | • Rite of Passage Fiction | |

Within the dystopian and speculative fiction genres, it deals with utopian ideals, environmental ethics, Indigenous beliefs and stories, and other archetypal tropes to achieve its narrative effects. As a mystery/thriller series it is an “edge of the seat” drama which will engage readers and also offer models for writing activities. The series also traces Ashala’s and her friends’ lives as teenagers, with flashbacks to events in their childhood, so it is essentially

also a rite of passage and “coming of age” series in which Ashala, Ember and Georgie find themselves in positions of power amongst their peers, and so experience the milestones attached to growing up, in an extremely heightened environment. The Tribe series is for readers of secondary level. It is a philosophical treatise on the nature of freedom, the ethics of social engineering, and the value of rebellion and resistance.

BOOK 1: THE INTERROGATION OF ASHALA WOLF

“I don’t know why you can’t understand it, but you matter, Ash. You transform things in a way that no one else can, and I know you’re going to change everything for Illegals. If everyone has to die to protect you, so be it.” (Bk 1, p 221)

Sixteen year old Ashala Wolf has the ability to Sleepwalk, and to take others with her on her journeys. She leads a band of rebels which she names her “Tribe”. Her life was overturned when her sister Cassie was killed, something for which Ashala feels responsible, despite the fact that it was the government which killed her. Until now, the Tribe has been left alone in the Firstwood – where they live sheltered by the mighty tuart trees and in proximity to the huge, roaming “saur”, who live in the grasslands at the forest’s edge. But the government has decided to take action and to attempt to destroy “the Tribe”.

When *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* begins, Ashala has been captured by the government and is on her way to interrogation at a new detention centre near the forest. The “enforcer” who captures her is named Justin Connor, and Ashala has niggling memories of some connection between them. The administrator, Neville Rose, is pure evil. His staff members include Miriam Grey who operates the Machine which interrogates suspects, and Dr Wentworth who has the ability to “Mend” people but who has been given an Exemption for her power.

As the novel progresses Ashala has disturbing dreams during her interrogation, and gradually recovers her memories with the help of Ember Crow and Georgie Spider. She has haunting encounters with the “Serpent”, an ancient spirit with a deep connection to Ashala. Connor also proves to be a secret member of the Tribe, and the bond between him and Ashala results in them orchestrating a daring escape by a group of child detainees, and a hair-raising return to the Firstwood.

BOOK 2: THE DISAPPEARANCE OF EMBER CROW

“However this ends, you’re probably going to find out some things about me, and they’re not nice things. But, Ash, even after you know, do you think you could remember the good? And whatever you end up discovering – try to think of me kindly. If you can.” (Bk 2, p 28)

The book begins with Ashala living with the wolves, which she has been doing for roughly five weeks prior to the start of the narrative. When Ember goes missing, Georgie, Connor and Daniel come to find Ash. Ember has sent a cryptic memory

INTRODUCTION

carried by a dog – a black Labrador named Nicky – which indicates she has left to protect them. With Connor, Ash visits the Serpent (Grandfather) who warns against “angels”.

Jules (Ember’s friend) arrives with a message and a stone containing more of Ember’s memories. Those memories reveal she’s the daughter of the legendary scientist, Alexander Hoffman, and she and her siblings are ancient synthetic beings named “aings” - Artificial Intelligence New Gaia Lifeforms. It also reveals that Ember has been taken by her deranged brother, who has Illegals working for him called “minions”. Terence has effectively brainwashed these Illegals into devoting their lives to him with the promise that doing so will mean they can one day be part of the Balance. Connor, Jules and Ashala set off for Spinifex City to rescue Ember from Terence. In the course of doing so it emerges that Ember is responsible for inventing the Citizenship Accords: “... I came up with the idea that Illegals were unnatural, that they weren’t part of the Balance. People needed something to bind them together, or humanity wasn’t going to make it. So I gave them an enemy.” (Bk 2, p 308)

Ember created the Accords after her youngest brother Dominic was killed by someone with an ability. Ashala is able to forgive Ember because she understands what it is to lash out in a moment of grief and terror (she almost did the same in Bk 1 after her little sister died). She also realises that Dominic is Nicky the dog (Dominic became the interrogation machine after the circuits that were all that remained of him were used to build it. Ashala brought the machine back to Ember at the end of book 1, and Ember rebuilt her lost brother as the dog Nicky.) After escaping from Spinifex City they receive a warning that Terence is targeting the “Adjustment” where Neville Rose and Miriam Grey will be held accountable for their crimes. Ashala, Connor and Daniel intervene but are unable to prevent Terence’s minions from rescuing Neville Rose, or from killing Jeremy Duoro, one of their allies among Citizens.

This book is about what it is to be human and the value of all life, human and non-human alike. As Alexander Hoffman puts it: “Whether we are organic or synthetic, whether we walk on two legs or four, whether we are creature of claw or foot or wing or feet – it matters not. Composition does not determine character, nor greatness of soul.” (Bk 2, p 318) It also raises questions of guilt and innocence; love and betrayal, and ultimately redemption. Ashala speaks of a fight more important than any that has gone before, one between those “who want to stop the hating, and those who don’t” (Bk 2, p 425). She comes to realise the poisonous nature of hate: “Ember, what I’m trying to say is, I have hated, and you have hated. But sooner or later someone has to stop the hating or it goes on forever. And I think the only way we’re ever going to truly be able to truly let go of it, is if we start with the hate we have for ourselves.” (Bk 2, p 432)

BOOK 3: THE FORETELLING OF GEORGIE SPIDER

It had begun to dawn on me soon after everything was over that there’d been things people hadn’t told me. The more I’d thought about it, the more I realised that there’d been something big going on,

something that had Georgie at its centre. (Bk 3, p 9)

The final book is told in two voices: Ashala’s, as she tries to protect the Tribe, and Georgie’s as she tries to protect Ashala. Georgie has Foreseen Ashala’s death and that it will mean the end of the world. She also Foresees that it is the choices of certain people that will keep Ashala alive, and unbeknownst to Ashala, enters into a plan with those people to save Ashala’s life.

When the book begins we discover that as a result of the strengthening reform movement, Prime Willis has persuaded the other Primes to vote on changes to the Citizenship Accords. Ashala is hopeful of a changing world, however, enigmatically, the Serpent tells Ashala: *The world will not become as it was meant to be unless you become as you were meant to be.* (Bk 3, p 69) Ashala travels to Gull City. However the moment Ashala arrives there is an explosion at the train station, caused by minions working for Terence. Penelope, a member of Ashala’s Tribe, dies in the explosion saving Ashala’s life. Terence and Neville then attack the city. Ashala saves the lives of the four Primes who are trapped with her. Partly as a result of this and partly to protect themselves from Terence’s minions, the Primes vote to repeal the Citizenship Accords (p 154). Ashala, Connor and Jules then liberate Detention Centre 1 before returning to the Firstwood.

Back at the Firstwood, the result of the choices of those who matter means Ashala realises she can bring back Alexander Hoffman (who has a synthetic body and is “sleeping” in tunnels beneath the Firstwood). She does so and travels with Hoffman, Jules, Ember and Connor to a meeting of Ember’s family, where Terence tries to persuade the other aings that Ashala is a threat that must be destroyed. He is thwarted by Hoffman. Ember kills Terence as a result goes into a near-death state herself as she is programmed not to kill. Neville Rose then attacks the Firstwood, and kidnaps Ashala.

From Georgie’s perspective we see the Firstwood under attack and because of her Foretelling ability, she is able to “See” that Neville will kill Ashala in enough time for Connor and Hoffman to save her. But Daniel dies protecting Georgie from minions that are attacking the Firstwood. When Ashala learns of Daniel’s death, the hatred she sees in the world causes her to snap: this world was not the one that was meant. *I flat out screamed my anger and frustration, “It isn’t supposed to be like this!”* (Bk 3, p 414) She then Sleepwalks and uses up her ability forever to give the world a dream of “what was meant”: *A world of connections, where everyone understood that the difference between good and bad was the difference between the people who valued those connections and the ones who didn’t ... All life matters or none does. All people matter or none do.* (Bk 3, p 418)

The theme of this book is the power of individual choice and the way in which disparate groups of people can come together to achieve positive change. It is the resolution of the larger “fight” spoken of in Bk 2, the battle between those who want to stop the hating and those who don’t – and it those who want to stop hating who ultimately triumph.

A. Critical Literacy – Before and After Reading the Series

Critical literacy depends on an understanding of both the conventions of a text, and the notions and expectations we bring to it as a reader. Every reader comes to a text with expectations. These can be determined by a previous knowledge of a writer's body of work, from critical reception such as reviews or media coverage, or from the fact that the first book in The Tribe series was short-listed in both the Science Fiction and Young Adult categories of the 2012 Aurealis Awards. Consider these and other points as you read and discuss this novel.

- What does the front cover text, and back cover blurb indicate about each of the novels in the series? How did it align with what you read?
- What do each of the three book titles seem to suggest?
- Compare the series to other Dystopian Fictions. [See Bibliography.]
- Kwaymullina characterises the Tribe series as an Indigenous futurism (in the Author Essay). Compare the book to the work of other Indigenous writers writing within the YA speculative fiction genre (Catherine Knutsson, Teagan Chilcott, and Cynthia Leitich Smith) [See Bibliography.]

At the end of Bk 2, Ambelin Kwaymullina has written an Author Note which explains some of her inspiration in writing the series: *To write a dystopia is to write of the end of the world. But in an animate, interconnected existence, where everything has consciousness and agency, life is not easily overcome. Its nature is always to adapt; to change; to make itself anew – and in so doing, to remake all else. This is the cry of the trees of the Firstwood: We live. You live. We survive! Everything lives, and nothing dies.* (Bk 2, p 443) Keep this quote in mind, as you read and re-read the series.

B. Themes and Curriculum Topics

The series deals with the following themes and curriculum topics:

Dystopian Future Society

Key Quote: “Well,” Connor said dryly, “those angels were supposed to be messengers of some kind of god. Since a lot of people thought the Reckoning was a holy judgment on humanity, it’s likely they imagined the angels. Because even if there were any gods, they didn’t cause the Reckoning. Everyone knows it was humanity’s abuse of the environment that made the life-sustaining systems of the Earth collapse.” (Bk 1, p 12)

Discussion Point: In most dystopian futures, technology either breaks down or is deliberately destroyed in order to bring about a new society. In this series, technology is frowned upon as it’s believed that it destroyed the old world. “So if that machine is a computer, then Neville is breaking the Benign Technology Accords.” (Bk 1, p 289) I mean, everyone knew the dangers of advanced tech. (Bk 1, p 290) Anti-technology is a feature of many dystopian fictions. What good do you think technology can do, and what

harm? What do you think Alexander Hoffman meant when he said *advances in technology can never compensate for failures in empathy?* (Bk 2, p 120)

Discussion Point: This series examines the notion of “building a better society” and how that might have both positive and negative connotations; how it might, for example, be manipulated by a government with less than honest intentions. In Bk 2, Ember says one of the purposes of the Citizenship Accords was to unite people against a common enemy: *People needed something to bind them together, or humanity wasn’t going to make it. So I gave them an enemy.* (Bk 2, p 308) Do you agree people need an enemy to unite? What else might bring people together?

Discussion Point: The Accords include: “*The Necessities-of-Life Accords, that require the governments of the seven cities to provide food, clothing, medicine and shelter for all. The Benign Technology Accords, to ensure that we never develop the harmful technology that had such disastrous consequences for the old world, like nuclear power, or genetically modified crops. And the Citizenship Accords, to prevent Illegals from upsetting the Balance.*” (Bk 1, p 33) “*Or the Advanced Weaponry Accords or the Collective Transportation Accords...*” (Bk 1, p 33) Invite students to write up a list of fictional Accords which might be written up by such a society. Encourage them to be inventive, ironic and even humorous in their imagined list.

Discussion Point: “*The Food Distribution Accords are there to make sure everyone always has enough to eat, not like the old world where more than half the planet went hungry and the rest ate to excess.*” (Bk 2, p 246) This seems a perfectly reasonable assumption. But what barriers are there to achieving global equality in access to food? Why does our world find this so difficult to enforce and monitor? Use resources such as the following to further discuss this topic: “School Resources” World Vision <www.worldvision.com.au/resources/SchoolResources/issues.aspx>

Discussion Point: The twin concepts of Utopia/Dystopia and the word “Ecotopia” used in the marketing for this series, may be defined as a matter of perspective or point of view. If you had to design a perfect society, what would it look like?

Discussion Point: *Rules. The government loved their rules.* (Bk 1, p 79) This statement implies that this is a problem, but could any government operate without rules?

Discussion Point: “*Each of us took responsibility for a city,*” Delta chimed in. “*It was so much fun! Only ...*” Her voice trailed off, and she directed an angry glare at me. “*Human beings messed it up. We needed them to unite so everyone could survive, and they wouldn’t. They fought over everything.*” (Bk 2, p 307) Is human nature naturally argumentative? How easy is it to gain consensus on how something should be managed? Reflect on students’ personal experiences.

Discussion Point: This dystopian world has reversed the order of

CLASSROOM IDEAS

things: “Saur’s” or giant lizards (based on Australian “megafauna”) are prowling on the plains, but lions and other animals have become extinct: “Lions were cats,” Jules replied. “Big cats. Like sabers. Only I think they had spots.” (Bk 2, p 249) What other changes might occur in such a dystopian world? Invite students to posit some ideas and to incorporate them in a story they write [See Genre 1. Dystopian Fiction p 15.]

Discussion Point: According to Kwaymullina, one of the inspirations behind the Reckoning is the *World Scientist’s Warning to Humanity*, which you view online here: <www.ucsusa.org/about/1992-world-scientists.html#.VVnlqaUyBFI> If you had to imagine a dystopia, what would bring about the end of the world?

Treatment of, and Detention of Refugees

Key Quote: *Our imaginary rebel was trying to overthrow the Citizenship Accords, the law that made anyone born with an ability an “Illegal”. Our abilities were supposed to make us a threat to the Balance, the harmony of the world. Most Illegals were locked up in detention centres, except for those few whose abilities were considered “benign” enough to be given an Exemption from the Accords.* (Bk 2, p 19)

Discussion Point: Ashala’s world defines “citizenship” according to whether or not someone has an ability. How does Australia define what it is to be a citizen? What is the definition of a refugee, and how are refugees created? Use resources such as the following to further discuss this topic:

- Department of Immigration and Border Protection <www.immi.gov.au/event/AusCitzDay/Pages/schools.aspx>
- Australian Human Rights Commission, Face the Facts: Asylum Seekers and Refugees, <www.humanrights.gov.au/face-facts-asylum-seekers-and-refugees>

Discussion Point: “I think Friends of Detainees would help, don’t you, Jeremy?” He stopped pacing, his face lighting up. “Yes, and the smaller groups too. We’ll contact them all – Citizens against Detention, Mothers of Illegals, Free the Children...” (Bk 1, p 334) This suggests there has been a proliferation of groups in Ashala’s world advocating on behalf of detainees. Compare to groups at work in Australia today who advocate on behalf of refugees, such as the Refugee Council of Australia. What does the Refugee Council do, and why does it do it? Use resources such as the Refugee Council of Australia website <www.refugeecouncil.org.au> to further discuss this topic.

Violent or Non-Violent Participation in Rebellion or Dissent

Key Quote: “We can’t change the world with violence. Only with ideas.” (Bk 1, p 38)

Discussion Point: “What I never told you was that ideas can be violent. That they can shape violence, and justify it and perpetuate it. I once did something very bad, Ash. And as if that wasn’t enough, I had a bad idea.” (Bk 2, p 303) How do ideas shape violence? How can they stop it? Discuss the negative and positive effects of ideas.

Activity: Is it possible to combat violence without using violence? What are some ways in which there have been non-violent forms of resistance throughout human history? [See also Writing Exercises 3. p 16.]

Indigenous History, Cultural Influences and Beliefs

Key Quote: *Night would follow day, and the seasons would shift, and all that was would live and die and live again. And the Tribe will endure forever ...* (Bk 3, p 345)

Discussion Point: Kwaymullina describes the Tribe series as an Indigenous futurism, a form of writing where Indigenous people use their “knowledges, cultures and experiences to imagine the future from an Indigenous perspective”. In what ways does Kwaymullina incorporate an Indigenous perspective into the Tribe series in relation to the connection between humans and their environments, including animals and plants? Refer to Kwaymullina’s essay and use quotes from the books to support your answer, for example: *I called out to the trees in my head. If I could make it back to you, I would.* (Bk 1, p 140) OR *These trees grew from seeds that survived the great chaos. They carry within them the memories of their ancestors, the lost forests of the old world. They do not forget what humans have done.* (Bk 1, p 189)

Discussion Point: In the author essay, Ambelin Kwaymullina discusses Indigenous conceptions of time, which are portrayed by Grandfather and Starbeauty. How do Grandfather and Starbeauty convey a sense of non-linear time? Use quotes to support your answer.

Discussion Point: The author writes that the Tribe series was influenced by her family’s experiences as part of the Stolen Generations. Who were the Stolen Generations? What was the history of the Stolen Generations in Western Australia? How does this history affect Indigenous people today? Use the following resource to further discuss this topic: The Australian Human Rights Commission Bringing Them Home Education Module <www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/education/publications/rightsed-bringing-them-home>

Discussion point: Kwaymullina writes of how the Balance reflects Aboriginal understanding of the world. What do you think the relationship is between the Balance and Aboriginal understandings of reality?

Difference

Key Quote: *Whether we are organic or synthetic, whether we walk on two legs or four, whether we are creature of claw or foot or wing or feet – it matters not. Composition does not determine character. Nor greatness of soul.* (Bk 2, p 318).

Discussion Point: *And after the way I’d seen people react to us today – even after Connor had saved all those lives – I knew that for as long as we had to prove we deserved to be treated the same as everyone else, we never would be.* (Bk 3, p 135) What rights do you

think every human being should have? What is the international bill of rights? Australian Human Rights Commission: Human Rights Explained <www.humanrights.gov.au/education/human-rights-explained-index>

Friendship and Peer Group Pressure

Key Quote: “You’re not alone,” I whispered. “You’ve got us.” (Bk 2, p 24)

Discussion Point: The Tribe offers a powerful support network for its members. How would these young people cope without the Tribe? How would Ashala, Ember and Georgie have coped with their losses without it?

Discussion Point: *The third ring, the smallest, represented the people in the Tribe who knew the least about our secrets. These were the newcomers, the youngsters, and a few others who Ember didn’t consider to be entirely reliable. Then there was the middle ring of long-term Tribe members, and finally the first ring, the largest one. That last circle was made up of Georgie, Ember and me. And now Connor and Daniel too, I guessed.* (Bk 1, p 165) Discuss the structure of this “friendship group” in comparison to students’ own perceptions of their friendship groups.

Discussion Point: *It’s simple, Connor. Family is family.* (Bk 1, p 294) How does the Tribe operate as a “family”?

Discussion Point: *“Exile,” I said heavily. “We exile her. Everyone gets told what she did, and she’s never allowed to come back here.” It was the worst fate I could imagine, and I felt close to tears to inflict it on Briony, even after everything she’d done.* (Bk 1, p 294) Is being exiled from a group of friends the worst punishment anyone can receive? Invite students to consider this question in terms of their own experiences.

Leadership

Key Quote: “I guess I didn’t have bad dreams because I wasn’t responsible for anything, when I was with the wolves. I wasn’t in charge.” “And that made you feel better. Because you don’t want to be the leader any more?” “No. Because ... because I’m not fit to be the leader.” (Bk 2, p 94)

Discussion Point: Ashala is worshipped as a leader. Why? What qualities make her a great leader?

Discussion Point: Ashala constantly worries about her Tribe, but also puts herself in danger. Is the latter a threat to her leadership?

Rite of Passage into Adulthood and Individuality

Key Quote: *I was at the end of a process that had begun with the wolves. Because the Pack had taught me something about letting go and not looking back.* (Bk 2, p 135)

Discussion Point: *She was reacting to me as if I was someone she should protect. A kid. She was years too late to protect me or any of*

the Tribe; we’d already figured out how to protect ourselves. We’d had to, and we weren’t going back to putting our lives in the hands of adults now. (Bk 3 p 177). How has the experience of being let down by the adults of their world affected the Tribe? How has it changed their experience of growing up? In the Author Note to Bk 3, why does Kwaymullina write that an absence of adults reflects the present day?

Discussion Point: Ashala overcomes her guilt about her sister, and her guilt over Evan’s death to move forward as an adult. Does growing up always entail acceptance of loss?

Activity: *“For us, ‘aging’ is our emotional maturity catching up with our mental maturity, and that means learning to process emotions.”* (Bk 2, p 198) Is that what happens when we all grow up? What happens if we get older but don’t learn to process emotions?

Survival and Endurance

Key Quote: *Wolves didn’t fall to pieces when one of their own was gone. If a Pack member died, that was to be mourned and accepted. But if one was missing ...* (Bk 2, p 30)

Discussion Point: Ashala is a survivor but there are different strategies one can use to become one. What strategies does Ashala use to survive?

Discussion Point: *“Jules, sometimes there’s not a lot of ... of honour, in the things we do to survive. But survival isn’t life. It’s just existence.”* (Bk 2, p 209) Ember offers a different view of survival here. Is she correct, or is Jules?

Ability and Power

Key Quote: *You must learn to understand your power.* (Bk 2, p 340)

Discussion Point: *“Sleepwalking is your ability. It is not your power.”* (Bk 2, p 45) What does Ashala’s grandfather mean by this? What is the difference between ability and power? What are the dangers of confusing the two?

Discussion Point: Ember is revealed to be an aingl in Bk 2. How did this change your perception of her abilities and her power?

Discussion Point: *“What you’re saying is the Lion is one of the most powerful people in Spinifex City.”* (Bk 2, p 250) Certain people have power or think they have power, at various points in the series. The Primes have power over their cities. Are perceptions and the reality of power often different? Discuss the theme of power in the series.

Discussion Point: Power is often misused. Consider Terence or Neville Rose’s use of power.

CLASSROOM IDEAS

Guilt and Forgiveness

Key Quote: *You give up too easily. Because you will not forgive. My chest was burning now, and I was starting to feel hot all over, kind of feverish. “Who am I supposed to forgive?” Yourself.* (Bk 1, p 119)

Discussion Point: How does self-doubt and forgiveness influence Ashala’s and Ember’s actions in Bk 2?

Activity: *“Before they came to the Firstwood, Ash lost her little sister and Connor lost his mother. Neither of them were there when it happened, and both think that if they had been they could’ve saved them. That they should have saved them instead of being the ones who survived.”* (Bk 3, p 82) Discuss “survival guilt”.

Discussion Point: *Hoffman needed to forgive himself. A grin broke over my face. I knew how to do that. Because I’d once had to forgive myself for failing to save my little sister Cassie, killed during a Citizenship Assessment. It had been Georgie who’d helped me see that hating myself for that was no way to value who Cassie had been, just as Hoffman hating himself was no way to value who Ember and Dominic had been.* (Bk 3, p 314) Does Hoffman forgive himself by the end of the third book in the series?

Love

Key Quote: *“You have to let her love. Because it’s the only thing more powerful than hate.”* (Bk 1, p 222)

Discussion Point: Love between people, between people and the earth and all forms of life is an ongoing theme in the series.

Discussion Point: Ashala is frequently described as a person whose love for others motivates everything she does: *But the memories I’m sinking are centred around people you love, and protecting what you love is your strongest instinct.* (Bk 1, p 171) OR *“My power. It’s ... to connect. To – to love.”* (Bk 2, p 431) Does the action in the series confirm the statements made in these quotes?

Discussion Point: Ambelin Kwaymullina believes that Ashala and Connor fall in love because they are alike (as do Ember and Jules), but that Georgie and Daniel fall in love because they are different to each other. Do you agree? Discuss, in the context of the following quotes about the three female protagonists and the men they love:

Ashala and Connor: *“So,” I concluded, “I guess what I’m trying to tell you is that in that other future, the one where you were an artist, I would have trusted you with my life. But in this future – Connor, in this future, I’m trusting you with my soul.* (Bk 1 p 305) OR *I told myself that it was absurd to think that, and yet I could not escape the growing conviction that she was someone who I had always been destined to know, or even that I somehow knew her already. That was absurd too. But I began to miss her, just the same.* (Bk 1, p 276) OR *“... We are warriors, We are partners. Or we are nothing”* (Bk 2, p 361).

Ember and Jules: *I saved you. I did. “I do not yield you to Terence,” I whispered. “Not body nor soul.”* (Bk 2, p 204) *“You know who I am, Red? I’m the person that lives when everyone else dies. I’m the one that’s okay when everyone else isn’t. And if you were as smart as you like to think, you would be too.” I have been that person. That’s how I know the gain isn’t worth the price.* (Bk 2, p 209)

Georgie and Daniel: *He was around me more than anybody. I’d asked him why once. He’d said that I’d know when I was ready to. So I must not be ready, because I still didn’t know.* (Bk 3, p 15) OR *“No, Georgie. I love you the way I love you.”* (Bk 3, p 186) *I’d always thought Ash was the only one who could pull me back from a future. I’d been wrong. The picture Daniel had of me was one that would always draw me to wherever he was.* (Bk 3, p 187)

Discussion Point: *“I’ll take whatever time I have, Leo. The same as you did, with Peter.” She reached out to squeeze his hand briefly. “Are you really going to tell me it wasn’t worth it?” The Lion smiled his rare, sweet smile. “No, I am not going to tell you that.”* (Bk 2, p 33) How has the loss of Peter affected Leo’s life?

Discussion point: How do the Tribe show their love for the Firstwood?

Discussion point: How does Grandfather show his love for Ashala and how does Starbeauty show her love for Leo?

Environmental Harmony Versus Destruction

Key Quote: *Images poured into my mind, nightmarish pictures of things I’d never seen before. Strange vehicles with metal jaws, weird saws with teeth that roared, and humans, always more humans, cutting and hacking and slashing and killing.* (Bk 1, p 195)

Discussion Point: *The Tribe didn’t eat the flesh of animals. We couldn’t. It would break the Pact I’d made with the trees when I’d first come here, to care for the forest and all the life in it.* (Bk 2, p 37–38) This is essentially the impetus to being a vegetarian or vegan. How important is it to live with the land and to not take from it? Should we all observe the principles of the Tribe?

Discussion Point: What is the Balance? How is the Balance in the world as it is presented in this series similar to the concerns in our contemporary world with climate change?

Discussion Point: *He’d never had a family before us, so he didn’t know what it was to belong. Then I realised he did. Because Jules was connected to the forest the same way the rest of the Tribe was – through an animal.* (Bk 3, p 113). Go to Kwaymullina’s website and discover what animal would connect you to the Firstwood. All the Tribe take on characteristics of the animals they are linked to. Is your animal anything like you? Why or why not?

Memory

Key Quote: “The way memory works is, we make sense of the things that are happening now by putting them into context, which is provided by things that happened before. So the underneath part of your mind, the bit under the surface of the water, is your past experiences. Those past experiences give you a structure that you slot your present experiences into. Like the way the presence of the rocks affects the currents of the water. Are you with me so far?” (Bk 1, p 169)

Discussion Point: The dreaded machine to which Ashala is forcibly strapped reads minds and steals memories: “*Memories that hurt – I guess they’d be significant to a person. While memories that hurt to give up ...*” “*Are the ones that betray. Exposing something about yourself, or others.*” (Bk 1, p 52) Discuss these various reflections on memories.

Discussion Point: *Hiding memories people didn’t want to forget made them crazy.* (Bk 2, p 296) How important is memory to a person’s mental and physical health?

Activity: Ember can take others’ memories and share, change or invent new ones. Her memory is endless. Discuss whether Ember’s ability might be seen as metaphorical for social media and the internet in our contemporary society. How dangerous is technology to our society?

Morality

Key Quote: “*Justifying it. We have to be certain the death was unavoidable. Necessary. Problem is, what we each think is justifiable depends on where we draw our boundaries of right and wrong.*” (Bk 2, p 194)

Activity: Jeremy Duoro and others present at the battle at Detention Centre 3 in Bk 1, are troubled by the supposed deaths of the children who were actually protected by the Saur. Is it ethical of the Tribe to let people continue to believe they were killed, in order to further their cause? Are lies ever justified or ethical? Consider as well, the lie that Prime Willis and Ashala tell in Bk 2, pp 424–6.

Discussion Point: Ember and her siblings are programmed to feel extreme pain if they kill a person. If they can’t “resolve” a death they shut down/die. How could this system be exploited by immoral aingls? What could be another method of preventing aingls from killing people?

Discussion Point: *Justice was everyone Neville had ever hurt getting the chance to tell their story and see him answer for what he’d done. Besides, I couldn’t take Neville’s life on the same day we’d lost Daniel. Because it was no way to respect who Daniel had been.* (Bk 3, p 412) Is killing ever justified? What is the difference between Ashala’s view on this and Alexander Hoffman’s?

Death, Grief and Redemption

Key Quote: “*You know how it goes, Em. Before is nothing. All that matters is what Tribe members do with their lives once they’ve been given a chance to have a life.*” (Bk 2, p 326)

Discussion Point: “*People, animals, trees – everything grieves, and regrets, and mourns what’s passed. Only nothing is ever truly gone forever.*” (Bk 1, p 279) There is a lot of grief and loss in this series. How do the central characters cope with it?

Discussion Point: The Tribe members are comforted by the fact that Daniel and others will find them again in future lives. How much does human nature rely on the concept of redemption and alternative endings to life?

Discussion Point: “*It isn’t only what happened to Dominic that makes him hate us, is it? He’s afraid of the idea of death. Of having to end.*” (Bk 2, p 354) Despite their special powers, the aingls fear death. Why?

C. English Language and Literacy

Plot and Structure

1. Each of the novels in the series are structured chronologically with several flashbacks explaining the action further. [See also Voice, Style and Use of Language, p 13.]

Discussion Point: In *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* and *The Disappearance of Ember Crow*, large parts of the story are told in alternate voices in flashback through Ember’s ability to capture memories in objects (usually a stone). In *The Foretelling of Georgie Spider* the two alternate voices have Ashala reliving the past and Georgie visiting alternate futures. How does this storytelling technique affect the pace of the novels? How would the novels be different if the stories were told strictly chronologically?

2. Pacing, tension and suspense are essential in crafting a novel’s structure. Each chapter should begin with an enticing statement, for example:

- Bk 1, Day One, begins: *He was taking me to the machine.* (Bk 1, p 7)
- Bk 2, The Pack, begins: *I was Wolf.* (Bk 2, p 7)
- Bk 3, The End, begins: *I floated, adrift in my own consciousness.* (Bk 3, p 7)

Each should also end with a “cliffhanger” statement or question, as an invitation to read on, for example:

- Bk 1, Day Two, The Wound, ends: “*Ashala, Briony is dead.*” (Bk 1, p 126)
- Bk 2, The Numbers, ends: *I don’t know when I made the terrible mistake of falling asleep.* (Bk 2, p 86)
- Bk 3, The Foretelling, ends: *Ashala Wolf was going to die.* (Bk 3, p 17)

CLASSROOM IDEAS

Activity: Study each novel in the series, and discuss the ways in which the pacing and therefore the reader's engagement is influenced by these structural "exclamation points".

Activity: Use one of the chapter beginnings to write your own story loosely connected to the events in the series. e.g. *This is very odd.* (Bk 1, Day Two, The Park, p 81) [See also Worksheet #2. Story Starters, p 18.]

3. The novel works as a series of narrative arcs, with set-up, confrontation (or conflict) and resolution in a series of small, and then a major plot turning point.

Activity: Draw a narrative map or chart showing the key causal events and points at which the narrative rises, falls, and then rises again to this major turning point.

4. The events which make up the plot of a novel are imagined by the writer to further develop characters and themes.

Activity: Which were the key events in terms of the theme of surviving a dystopian world and in the development of each major character? What were the turning points in Ashala/Ember/Georgie's stories?

5. Plot Denouement or Conclusion.

Activity: Invite students to summarise the denouement of each book in the series.

Characters

1. This novel includes several central and minor characters, who have been assigned one of three levels of status in this highly regimented future society.

Discussion Point: The three main female protagonists are very different: *Ash felt every moment all the way down to her bones, so she looked into the now. Ember held whole libraries of history in her perfect memory, so she looked back. But me? I looked ahead.* (Bk 3, pp 15–6) In what ways are they similar? [See Worksheet #3. Character Chart, p 19.]

Discussion Point: Were there any "minor" characters you would have liked to have seen feature more in the action?

2. Characters are often described in terms which relate them metaphorically or symbolically using similes and other figures of speech, for example, "Because I'm like a kite." "Um, a kite?" "I go flying around from future to future, and it'd be so easy to drift away and fly forever. Except I have you, and you're the person who holds the string, the one who pulls me back to the ground." (Bk 1, p 183)

Activity: Find other examples of such metaphorical descriptions of characters.

3. Characters can be further described via strategies such as using

details of their setting which "echo" their characteristics; they can also be described in contrast to each other.

Activity: Invite students to locate examples of these different strategies for describing a character in this series.

4. Dialogue can also add to the characterisation, for example, "I may have miscalculated in leaving you all alone," he conceded. "I didn't expect that one of these 'abilities' could be used to destroy you." "You always think you know everything, Dad, but you don't. We had to do the best we could to protect ourselves." (Bk 2, p 317)

Discussion Point: Discuss what this dialogue reveals about the two characters, Ember and Hoffman.

5. The novel contains (as all novels do) a mixture of characters, some intended to invoke sympathy in the reader, and others not to. There are also some who defy categorisation or whose motives remain obscure.

Discussion Point: Which characters did you have sympathy for and why? Which ones alienated or annoyed or puzzled you?

Voice, Style and Use of Language

1. Narrative Perspective, Person and Tense: The first novel in the trilogy is written in the first person, immediate past tense voice of Ashala. The second is written in alternate first person, immediate past tense voices of Ashala and Ember. The third is written in alternate first person, immediate past tense voices of Ashala and Georgie.

Activity: How did you feel that the first person perspective suited this narrative? How might it have worked differently in third person or second person?

Activity: Could it have been written in present tense, for example:

Inside was dimmer and cooler. The floor was lined with thin composite tiles, atop which sat piles of cushions and yet more pots of taffa vines. People sat on the cushions in groups of two, one person speaking and the other writing notes in books with red covers. Curious, I edged closer to one of the pairs so I could hear what they were talking about. (Bk 2, p 252)

Inside is dimmer and cooler. The floor is lined with thin composite tiles, atop which sit piles of cushions and yet more pots of taffa vines. People sit on the cushions in groups of two, one person speaking and the other writing notes in books with red covers. Curious, I edge closer to one of the pairs so I can hear what they are talking about.

Discussion Point: Who else might have told this story, and how might that have changed the action?

Activity: Write about an incident in Bk 1, in Connor's voice instead of Ashala's.

Activity: Write about an incident in Bk 2, in Jules’ voice instead of Ember’s or Ashala’s.

Activity: Write about an incident in Bk 3, in Daniel’s voice instead of Georgie’s.

How does this change each narrative?

2. Voice is created by a range of devices including syntax, choice of words, and literary devices such as metaphor and simile.

Activity: Find other examples of such techniques. Use the table below to record appropriate quotes.

Simile	
Metaphor	
Personification	

Activity: Choose and discuss some other quotes from the novel. Speak with students about the need to use language which is inventive and original.

3. The series contains extended metaphors which are integral to character and action. For example, each heroine has a name which denotes her character and drives the action. Ashala/Wolf; Ember/Crow; Georgie/Spider.

Discussion Point: Discuss the ways in which these metaphors permeate the narratives in each novel.

Discussion Point: What other extended metaphors did you identify in this series?

4. Humour appears in the series to alleviate some of the drama: for example, *“It’s very good, Jaz. Although in most situations you’d want people to see a saur coming. It tends to encourage fleeing in terror.”* *“Yeah. I only thought of that afterwards.”* (Bk 2, p 59) OR *“So for once, for all of five minutes, can the two of you just stay put and stop helping people!”* *Connor and I exchanged rueful glances. Then I said, “Well, I suppose. For five minutes.”* *“Possibly even ten,”* *Connor murmured.* (Bk 3, p 228)

Activity: What other examples of humour did you notice in this series? Use the table below to record appropriate quotes.

Sarcasm	
Irony	
Exaggeration	
Black Humour	

5. Symbolism: The series contains a range of different symbols.

Activity: Make note of recurring symbols in these texts, for example: Angels: *The last thing I was aware of before darkness claimed me was an angel, come to lift me into his arms and carry me*

out of the lion’s den. (Bk 1, p 67)

Setting

1. Description of detail: A vivid, convincing setting relies on description which makes it visually come alive for the reader, by its observation of detail, rather than describing a static picture, for example, Gull City is described evocatively (Bk 1, p 238).

Activity: Find other quotes in which description of detail enhances the reader’s perception of setting.

2. Evocative place names enhance a reader’s perception of setting too.

Discussion Point: *I focused on Gull City, my eyes following the road that led out of it and through to the Gull City towns – Eldergull, Aspergull, Halligull, Stonygull and Cambergull. Then the grasslands, and the Firstwood, and beyond that Spinifex City, and its towns – Junifex, Sivafex, Kallfex ...* (Bk 1, p 98) Why are these placenames so enticing? What do they suggest?

3. Literary Devices: Place is evoked by beautiful and evocative description, employing a range of literary devices.

Activity: Analyse how this passage works to create a sense of the place: *Rain sprinkled down, pattering over the lake and misting the air above the wildflowers, carpeting the surrounding hills in pink and white. Everlastings. That’s what those flowers were called. An appropriate memorial for Dominic. He had loved flowers, along with every other tiny thing about this world and all of the people in it.* (Bk 2, p 313)

Activity: What devices does the writer employ in this passage? Find and discuss other passages like this one.

4. Description should be informed by all the senses – sounds, tastes, smell as well as vision. E.g. *Rain, coming later today. The sharp tang of eucalyptus from the leaves of the huge tuart trees, and the lighter, minty smell of the peppermints that grew beneath them. The muskiness of treecats slumbering in branches high above us, the sweet headiness of waratah flowers and ... oh, rabbit!* (Bk 2, p 9)

Activity: Add to this passage an imagined description of the sounds, the feelings, the taste of things in the Firstwood. What sort of picture have you evoked?

Activity: The desert is described very visually, but uses personification to achieve effects with words such as: *bleached, bulging, trailing, pulsed* (Bk 2, p 234). Describe a landscape using techniques like this.

5. Mapping: The series contains “clues” to the topography of this country; such descriptions evoke differing images in the mind of the reader.

Activity: Draw the Tribe’s camp in the Firstwood. Compare your various images.

CLASSROOM IDEAS

Activity: We learn that Spinifex City is on the western side of the Firstwood (Bk 1, p 203); we hear about Gull City and an area called “the Steeps”; that the Tribe have lived in caves in the Firstwood; that Detention Centre 3 is another landmark; that *the rail ran around the entire world, linking the seven cities together*. (Bk 2, pp 164–5); Ember mentions Mangrove City and Fern City (Bk 2, p 173), the Deepwood near Fern City (Bk 2, p 180) and that Cloud City is joined to Fern City by an old highway (Bk 2, p 183–4). Draw a map of the country as it is described. [See also D. Visual Literacy Activities, p 17]

Genre

1. Dystopian Fiction

Dystopias (imperfect worlds) are the opposite of Utopias (perfect worlds). They feature apocalyptic worlds which have been destroyed or changed due to some cataclysmic event. In order to create a believable fictional world, science and history must underpin the writer’s imagined world. As with any fantasy the world must be credible in order to convince a reader.

Discussion Point: What aspects of science or history are used in this series to underpin the imaginary world?

Activity: List the features of a dystopian world you have imagined. Then write a story including these features.

2. Speculative Fiction

Activity: The creation of satisfactory, believable fantasy worlds relies on detail provided in the text, for example:

Bk 1: *I didn’t know what lions were, but I figured they were probably a bit like saurs, huge reptiles with claws and razor-sharp teeth.* (Bk 1, p 44)

Bk 2: *“We’ve got it all planned. If anyone comes onto the grasslands, we’ll get the saurs to deal with them. No one’s going to blame any of us for what the saurs do.”* (Bk 2, p 65)

Bk 3: *I didn’t know what an Africa was, or a Europe for that matter, but I understood quakes and fears about humanity surviving.* (Bk 3, p 299)

Discussion Point: What other details made this world come alive for you?

3. Mystery/Thriller

Mysteries and thrillers hinge on suspense, questions unanswered, and events left open-ended.

In Bk 1: According to Kwaymullina the way in which Bk 1 is written is partly inspired by classic detective fiction, where everything means something (only not what the reader initially thinks). For the period in which Ashala does not have access to

her memories, she assigns meanings to events or behaviour (especially Connor’s behaviour). She later finds out she has misunderstood as she lacked the memories that would have allowed her to interpret the world correctly. Because the reader is viewing things through Ashala’s eyes, they have also been misinterpreting what they have been seeing.

In Bk 2, there are several major turning points to map: Grandfather serpent warns Ashala: *“Beware the Angels”* (Bk 2, p 46); Georgie inscribes mysterious sequences of numbers on the cave floor (Bk 2, p 84); and then Ashala and Connor find the angel rhyme in Ember’s laboratory which relates to the numbers (Bk 2, p 108); the dog Nicky leads them to find a secret door (Bk 2, p 110) opens with the code; they discover that it’s a “Hoffmann cache” (Bk 2, p 118); Connor discovers a blueprint for a form of artificial intelligence: “Artificial Intelligence New Gaia Lifeform” (Bk 2, p 123); Ashala receives a note and a memory stone from Ember (Bk 2, p 148); Jules reveals that Ember’s father was Hoffman and that she is 217 years old (Bk 2, p 162); *That I was built, not born, for a start.* (Bk 2, p 163); *“And tell her I put the poem in order, from the most trustworthy of us to the least.”* (Bk 2, p 207); Ember reveals that Hoffman is in an inert state in the Tunnels: *In the end, shutting him down completely had been the only way to save his mind.* (Bk 2, p 215); Connor and Ashala work out who the numbers relate to (Bk 2, pp 223–4); Ashala realises that Nicky the dog is the rebuilt creature of her dreams and that he is constructed from parts of Dominic, Ember’s brother (Bk 2, p 322).

In Bk 3: Events are frighteningly predicted by dire warnings that Ashala will die. She says of herself and Connor at one point: *We probably wouldn’t make it to the end.* (Bk 3, p 38)

Activity: List any other clues or mystery devices in each of the novels in the series.

Activity: Test students’ comprehension by having them interpret the “Angel Rhyme” (Bk 2, pp 107–8).

4. Rite of Passage Fiction.

YA novels often are based on the notion of a “rite of passage” or maturation. They are generally distinguished by a first person narrator, and often by alternative narrators.

Activity: Read and compare this novel to other contemporary examples of the “rite of passage” novel. eg *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee; *Looking for Alibrandi* by Melina Marchetta; *Stony Heart Country* by David Metzenthén; *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger; *Good Oil* by Laura Buzo.

Discussion Point: How does this series represent rite of passage fiction? Use quotes to support your response.

5. Series Writing:

A series is a sequence of books either linked thematically by a

group of characters, or published in a similar format by one or multiple authors. The Tribe is the former.

Discussion Point: What are the challenges involved in writing a series?

Activity: Write your own abbreviated synopsis of each book in three sentences.

Activity: Series often rely on repeated situations, events or motifs to create links between each title. For example, each book title contains a name and a noun (*The Interrogation of...*; *The Disappearance of...*; *The Foretelling of...*) describing a situation. What other repeated ideas or patterns in the plot did you notice as you read the series?

Discussion Point: On The Tribe website there is a media quote about the series: “*This first teenage novel from an Indigenous author gives The Hunger Games an Australian run for its dystopian money... the writing is supple and confident and Ashala is an inspiring role model.*” SA Weekend October 7, 2012. Do you agree/disagree, and why?

Activity: The series ends with Bk 3. Are there questions yet unanswered in this series? What are they? What might happen next if there had been a fourth book: write a synopsis.

Writing Exercises

1. Expository Writing: Write an essay about one of the Themes & Curriculum Topics above. Use the following resource as an example of the techniques which might be used: descriptive, sequential, compare/contrast, cause/effect/ problem/solution. “Expository Writing” <http://web.gccaz.edu/~mdinchak/ENG101/expository_writing.htm>
2. Book Cover Blurb: The packaging of a book includes the blurb as well as the cover image, both of which must offer the reader an insight into the contents, and the emotional impact of a novel (without giving the ending away), and must also market the book to its readers. Examine the covers of this trilogy, assessing how the front cover images and the back cover blurbs interact and are descriptive of the novels after you’ve read them. Then make up your own back cover blurbs summarising the themes of each novel in the series, in a few hundred words.
3. Conduct a Debate: Invite students to write an argument for the affirmative/negative on the question: “Non-Violent Participation or Protest is impossible.”
4. Acrostic Poem: Write an acrostic poem using the letters in the names of each of the three main protagonists. Use resources such as “Acrostic Poem” <www.acrosticpoem.org>
5. Rap Song Lyrics: Write the lyrics for a song describing The Tribe and its beliefs. Use the rap form, and write it as if the Tribe members have adopted it as their anthem or credo.

Quotes for Discussion

Book 1:

- ... *the point was that no one ever knows when something they say will cause a profound change in somebody else.* (Bk 1, p 45)
You are not going on, granddaughter. You are going back. (Bk 1, p 125)
- “Yes,” *I replied solemnly. “Nothing ever truly ends, only transforms.”* (Bk 1, p 141)
- *Ember says you can tell that events are of great social and historical significance when people start referring to them in capital letters.* (Bk 1, p 385)

Book 2:

- *Some truths cannot be told. They can only be discovered.* (Bk 2, p 46)
- “*Except she says the only real way to keep anyone from falling is to teach them how to fly.*” (Bk 2, p 68)
- *Dad had always believed that in order to truly understand human frailty, it was important to experience it.* (Bk 2, p 185)
- *You need to think around corners. Jules could do that. Ember too.* (Bk 2, p 283)
- “*Because I’d do anything to save him. But I’m not sure he’d do anything to live.*” (Bk 2, p 356)
- *People were good to the Earth now, but they weren’t good to each other, and it wasn’t enough to value only one kind of connection. All life matters, or none does.* (Bk 2, p 431)

Book 3:

- “*Choices!*” *I spun around. “It’s choices, Daniel! That’s what changes things.” He was smiling at me again. “Whose choices?”* (Bk 3, p 46)
- *Old things make new things. Old worlds made new ones.* (Bk 3, p 88)
- *I knew that for as long as we had to prove we deserved to be treated the same as everyone else, we never would be.* (Bk 3, p 135)
- “*I carry human history in my head, and that means I know what the world looks like when people don’t care for each other and the earth. So I want you to know that there is no price – and I mean none – that’s too high to pay to stop that world from happening again.*” (Bk 3, p 251)

Further Reading Ideas for Class Discussion

1. During interrogation, Ashala thinks of some of the Tribe members, and their special powers: *Trix making the earth rumble beneath us; Daniel moving so fast he was a blur in the air; Leo lifting a boulder that was three times his own weight.* (Bk 1, p 47) Later she observes the child detainees and recognises their powers: *Three Chirpers, one Rumbler, two Runners, four Growlers, three Leafers, one Waterbaby and one Pounder. And the Scaly Boy* (Bk 1, pp 84–5) What special ability/power would you like to have?
2. If you were a Saur, what would your name be, and what would you look like?
3. Make a list of all the abilities included in the series. Then

create your own list of other possible abilities.

4. Is Hoffman a good man? Did he redeem himself? Argue for and against.
5. Who is the most noble character in the series? Use quotations to support your argument.
6. Test your students' comprehension on aspects of the series. Use Worksheet 1. Comprehension Quiz, p 18 to begin this activity. Then create your own comprehension challenges.

D. Visual Literacy Activities

1. Create a comic strip version of one of the episodes in this series. [See Bibliography]
2. The covers of the series are united in some similar features. Design your own alternative series "look" for The Tribe series; add the blurbs you wrote in Writing Exercises 2 above.
3. Create a Map of the imagined world you wrote about in your story [See Genre 1. Dystopian Fiction, p 15].
4. Create a slogan and design a poster to promote one of the messages or themes included in this series. Show students posters that various campaigns have used to galvanise social or political action, as examples.
5. Paint and collage a picture of the Firstwood.

E. Further Ideas Using Technology

1. Conduct an author study: Find out as much as you can about Ambelin Kwaymullina by searching online.
2. Create a book trailer: Choose either a title or the entire series. See Walker Books' trailer for Bk 1: www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yUj5SM453c
3. Find and then write a review: Find some reviews, then have the class write their own. Visit for example: Insideadog www.insideadog.com.au/books/interrogation-ashala-wolf#comment-37580
4. Listen to an Interview with Ambelin Kwaymullina to inform your students' reading of the series. "Interview with Ambelin Kwaymullina" www.youtube.com/watch?v=eeY6vSc0-rQ
5. Design a poster on screen to advertise this series.

Conclusion

The Tribe trilogy is a work of Indigenous futurism written by an Indigenous Australian author. It is a wildly inventive series of novels of ideas. Students will find it both an exciting reading experience, and a provocative analysis of the questions a society and an individual must make in determining their futures.

Then I closed my eyes, and imagined a world. A world of connections, where everyone understood that the difference between good and bad was the difference between the people who valued those connections and the ones who didn't. Only it wasn't just a world for organic humans or synthetic ones. It was for trees and saurs and rivers and flowers and rocks. It was for wolves and yellowcrests and spiders and hawks and crows, and for all life everywhere. All of us or none of us. All life matters or none does. All people matter or none do. (Bk 3, p 418)

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Adult:

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 Orwell, George *1984* (Secker & Warburg, 1949)
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 <www.youngwriters.co.uk/types-acrostic>



WORKSHEET #1

COMPREHENSION QUIZ

Answer these questions by finding the answer in one of the titles in the series.

Book 1

1. Who was the Administrator at Detention Centre 3?
2. What Ability does Dr Wentworth have?
3. Who has traditionally been blamed for the destruction (and submersion in Lake Remembrance) of Vale City, the eighth and now lost city?
4. What does Jaz become after he dies?
5. Who is Hoffman?

Book 2

1. What warning does the serpent give to Ashala?
2. What is Taffa?
3. Who has become Prime of Gull City since Talbot's supposed death?
4. Which number in the Angel rhyme (about the 8 aingls) is Leo the Lion?
5. Who had Nicky the dog been in his past life?

Book 3

1. What does Jules call Connor?
2. Where does the major battle take place?
3. Who allows the taffa poison to be used against the Primes?
4. Who dies in Neville Rose's office?
5. What happens to Ashala at the end of the book?

WORKSHEET #2

STORY STARTERS

The sentences below appear in the series, some as chapter openings, and some as provocative statements elsewhere in the text. Use them to begin your own stories:

But I found no machine waiting for me. (Bk 1, p 23)

I jumped. "How did you get here?" (Bk 1, p 51)

I woke in an unfamiliar room. (Bk 1, p 69)

"Dead?" I asked. "She can't be dead. I just saw her." (Bk 1, p 127)

Ember is missing. (Bk 2, p 15)

I am the First Cat. (Bk 2, p 258)

The memory dissolved into mist, and the world returned. (Bk 2, p 319)

People are hurt? (Bk 2, p 396)

"Is he all right?" Jules spluttered. "That thing could have killed me!"(Bk 3, p 78)

Gull City had changed. (Bk 3, p 87)

Sometimes I knew where to be. Sometimes I didn't. (Bk 3, p 183)

"I don't know what to do!" Em said. (Bk 3, p 279)

Answers:

Book 1: 1. Neville Rose. 2. She is a Mender. 3. Skychanger. 4. A Saur. 5. The writer of The Reckoning.

Book 2: 1. Beware the Angels' (Bk 2, p 46) 2. 'Taffa was what Spintex City was famous for. It was a sweet, spicy drink brewed out of beans harvested from the pods growing on taffa vines.' (Bk 2, p 236) 3. Belle Willis. 4. Five. (Bk 2, p 329)

5. Dominic, Ember's younger brother. (Bk 2, p 428)

Book 3: 1. Flyboy. 2. Detention Centre 1. 3. Prime Peter Grant. 4. Blinker. 5. She loses her ability to sleepwalk.

WORKSHEET #3

CHARACTER CHART

Discuss the following quotations in relation to each of the characters.

Characters	Status	Quotation	
Ashala Wolf (AKA Ashala Jane Ambrose)	Sleepwalker/ ILLEGAL	<i>"this is what you do best. It's just like the Tribe. People come to the Firstwood all hurt and scared and angry at the world, but the only thing you see is the good in them, the greatest version of themselves that they could be. And somehow, most of them grow and change until they start becoming that person."</i> (Bk 1, p 150)	Series
Ember Crow (AKA Holds the Secrets)	Manipulates Memories/ ILLEGAL	<i>"I can't forget. Not anyone I meet, not anything I see or read or hear. I remember everything in perfect detail."</i> (Bk 1, p 205)	Series
Georgie Spider	Predicts Weather/ ILLEGAL	<i>But Georgie wasn't, and never would be, and I understood why. It wasn't easy for her to keep track of the world-that-was, not when she spent so much time peering into worlds-that-could-be.</i> (Bk 1, p 179)	Series
Justin Connor	Flies/Air-Controller/ Disguised as Enforcer/ Detention Centre/ ILLEGAL returns to Tribe	<i>Connor didn't have an animal, yet, and it occurred to me that maybe his link was with the forest itself. Or with Grandpa.</i> (Bk 2, p 49)	Series
Jules	Impersonator/ ILLEGAL	<i>Everything about him seemed to shout out that he didn't follow the rules, which was weird, given that most Illegals did their very best to appear to be law-abiding Citizens.</i> (Bk 2, p 143)	Bk 2 and 3
Daniel	Runner/ ILLEGAL	<i>There was a deep calm to Daniel that was endlessly reassuring; even in the worst of moments, nothing ever seemed quite so difficult or so desperate when he was around.</i> (Bk 3, p 50)	Series
Prime Belle Willis	Gull City/ CITIZEN	<i>...she moved with a purposeful energy, scanning her surroundings in a single glance.</i> (Bk 1, p 327)	Series
Neville Rose	Chief Administrator/ CITIZEN	<i>I knew his tale now, and it was a terrible one. The reason Chief Administrator Neville Rose imprisoned and tortured Illegals was simply because he liked doing it, and he'd never thought his actions were for the good of the Balance.</i> (Bk 1, p 144)	Bk 1
Miriam Grey	Machine Operator/ CITIZEN	<i>She was simply mad, a dog gone rabid.</i> (Bk 1, p 145)	Bk 1 and Bk 2
Prime Peter Grant	Mangrove City	<i>is the 'populist', Grant had only narrowly won the Mangrove City Prime election, and his opinions shifted depending on whatever he thought would help him get re-elected.</i> (Bk 3, p 132)	Bk 3
Starbeauty	Ancient Spirit	<i>People do worship me and obey my commands. "Because you tell them you are a god?" Because I tell them I am a cat.</i> (Bk 3, p 325)	Bk 2 and 3
Grandfather Serpent	Ancient Spirit	<i>"Do you live here, in my world, I mean?" I live in all worlds, and in the spaces between them.</i> (Bk 1, p 125)	Series
Terence (Ember's brother AKA Terence Talbot)	Former Prime of Gull City/ CITIZEN	<i>My brother Terence wasn't nice, he didn't ask the people who worked for him to do nice things, and he wasn't nice to them.</i> (Bk 2, pp 166-7)	Bk 2



PRAISE FOR *THE TRIBE*

"It is superbly written and is highly recommended."

MAGPIES MAGAZINE

"(Ambelin Kwaymullina's) poetic use of language and emotive descriptions build extraordinary scenes that incorporate unique characters with spirit guardians, fantastic abilities, mystery and adventure."

BUZZWORDS

"(The Tribe series) incorporates many elements of the author's indigenous heritage, such as spiritual wisdom and connection to the environment ... it is the indigenous undertones that set this story apart."

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