



RECOMMENDED FOR

Middle to upper primary students
Year 3 to 6, Ages 7-11

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English, History
- **General capabilities:** Literacy, Critical and creative thinking, Intercultural understanding
- **Cross-curriculum priorities:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, community and remembrance

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- To identify significant days commemorated in Australia, for example National Day of Healing (Sorry Day)
- To understand the significance of country, place and family to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- To investigate the democracy and citizenship of Aboriginal peoples

THEMES

- National Day of Healing (Sorry Day)
- The Stolen Generations
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture

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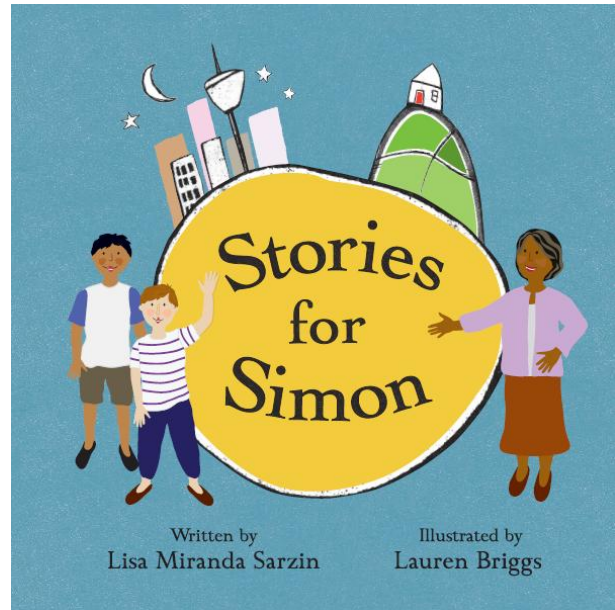
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Stories for Simon

Lisa Miranda Sarzin

&

Lauren Briggs

PLOT SUMMARY

Simon was given a boomerang by his uncle, wrapped in a piece of newspaper. When he took the boomerang to school to show his class, the teacher noticed an article in the newspaper wrapped around it. That article began Simon's journey of discovery.

The article described the Prime Minister's speech apologising to the Stolen Generations, which raised many questions within Simon and the other children in his class.

Simon's journey to understanding the significance of the word 'sorry' began with the sharing of stories, history and culture with his Aboriginal friend Vic. With the sharing of stories came an appreciation of the past and a positive vision for the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lisa Miranda Sarzin is a former lawyer and current PhD student. Together with her mother, Dr Anne Sarzin, Lisa has written a non-fiction book about collaborative initiatives between Jewish and Indigenous people in the realm of social justice. She is married with three young sons. *Stories for Simon* is Lisa's first children's book.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Lauren Briggs is a graphic designer, illustrator and mother of four children. She specialises in etching and print-making, and *Stories for Simon* is her first book.

INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

What inspired you to start writing/illustrating *Stories for Simon*?

We have been friends for a very long time and often talk about what is going on in our country and in our world. On 13 February 2008 we listened to former Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, give a speech in Parliament apologising to the Stolen Generations. It was a really important moment for our country. The speech made us think a lot about the pain and sadness of children being taken away from their families. It also made us ask a lot of questions, like: what does saying sorry mean for all Australians, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous and where do we go from here? What should all Australians be doing to heal the pain of the past and to build a bright future? We also noticed that children were asking similar questions, such as 'what happened to the Stolen Generations?' and 'How long do we have to be sorry for?' We concluded that our job as mothers was to teach our children about what happened to the Stolen Generations and to remind our children that we all have a part to play in creating a respectful, harmonious and positive society. It was out of all these thoughts and questions that the idea of a picture book was born. What a perfect way for all children, parents, grandparents, friends, carers and teachers to start to talk about these big issues.

Can you tell us a little bit about the research and the resources you used?

We read as widely as possible about what happened to the Stolen Generations, especially personal accounts of people who were taken away from their

families. We also visited museums and libraries, including the Australian Museum in Sydney and the Melbourne Museum. These museums have beautiful exhibits that help convey what happened to the Stolen Generations through text, photographs, paintings, art and other artefacts. We looked up the laws that gave permission for the government to forcibly remove children from their families. We gathered a great deal of background information that helped shape the story and the illustrations. Lauren began a visual diary filled with pictures, ideas and sketches to help develop a layout for the book and the style of illustrations to be used.

Right from the start we also had a mentor, a proud Bidjigal elder from La Perouse, Vic Simms. Vic was like a consultant, and we had many conversations with him about what happened to the Stolen Generations. We showed him our work as it progressed to ensure that everything we did was respectful of and sensitive to the subject matter.

Did you learn anything unexpected as a result of creating this book?

We had always intended that any profit we made from the book would be donated towards Indigenous education. When we were deciding which charity to support, we learnt about the Goodes O'Loughlin Foundation (GO) and the work they do to provide Indigenous children with scholarships to attend quality private schools.

What was the most challenging part of the project?

Probably the most challenging part was taking very big social issues and breaking them down into a simple and meaningful story.

What was the most rewarding part of the project?

Imagine working with one of your very best friends on a creative project that you are both completely passionate about. Working collaboratively from the start has enabled us to bounce ideas off each other, find connections between the text and the illustrations and develop the best result for every page. Sharing the creative journey has been very rewarding for both of us.

Lisa, can you tell us anything about how you chose to write the story?

Because I chose to tell this story from the perspective of a young boy, I wanted the writing style to reflect the innocence, compassion and simplicity of a child's world. I wanted the language to have a poetic quality to match the dream elements of the narrative. As the story deals with a



dark part of Australia's past, some of the words are deliberately heavy and sad. But ultimately, this is a story about hope for the future and so there are many words that evoke a positive vision.

Lauren, can you tell us about how the illustrations were created?

I considered a number of things when creating the layout and illustrations for *Stories for Simon*. As I have a background in graphic design, I enjoyed thinking about the composition of each page (where the different details would be placed and how they would fit together) and how the book would look as a whole.

I spent a lot of time thinking about how to represent Lisa's text visually and how to create layers of meaning within one illustration.

In keeping with the tone of the text, I wanted to create whimsical illustrations that allowed the reader to experience the world through the eyes and dreams of a nine-year-old boy. As I am passionate about print making, I felt that etching would be the ideal medium to achieve my goals for the illustrations. I love the effect of print making and how the different textures and lines can bring emotion to the illustrations.

A little bit about the etching process...

Once I was happy with the layout and images for every page, I decided which elements would be etched and which would be drawn. Etching is a very technical process and requires a special lab to work in. The first step is to apply a layer of melted wax onto a metal plate. Once the wax has hardened, I use a metal pencil to draw my images onto the plate, removing the wax as I go. I then place the metal plate into a chemical bath. The acid in the chemicals eats into the exposed lines on the plate. The plate is then cleaned using other chemicals and powders, leaving the etched lines in the metal. I then apply a thick ink onto the plate. Once the plate is evenly covered, a special gauze is used to wipe the ink off the plate leaving ink only in the etched grooves. The metal is then pressed face-down onto pre-soaked and dried paper and wound through a printing press. That leaves a lovely print on paper. The final etchings that you see in the book have been scanned in and deep-etched (cut out of their backgrounds) and layered with illustrations that I drew.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Look at the front cover of the book. Read the title together. Can you identify Simon in the picture? Who else can you see? What other pictures are on the page? What do you think this story might be about?
2. Read the blurb at the back of the book.
The book is about the national apology to the Stolen Generations. What do you know about the Stolen Generations?
What do you feel about it?
What questions do you have?

KEY STUDY TOPICS

English

Questions

1. On the first page, Simon is showing the place where he lives, which is described as 'in a big city near a famous beach'. Can you tell by looking at the picture which city he lives in? Can you name a beach or bay in that city?
 2. Simon had a newspaper article that reported on the event of the Prime Minister of Australia saying sorry to the Stolen Generations. Identify and describe a time in your life when you caused hurt to someone and said sorry. What happened? Why did you say sorry? How did you feel after you said sorry? Did apologising help the situation? What happened next?
 3. After Simon's teacher and mother explained who the Stolen Generations were, Simon had a dream where clouds were raining stones with the word 'sorry' on them. What do you think his dream meant? What do the stones represent? Why do you think the author chose stones rather than another object? How does the dream show what Simon was feeling about the Stolen Generations?
1. At the end of the story, Simon had a dream where Aunt Betty threw stones into the sky and they turned into stars. What do you think this dream meant? What is the difference between the two dreams?



Activities

1. Simon lives in Sydney, near a famous beach, as is shown in the first illustration in the book. The prologue of the book is written by Vic Simms, a Bidjigal man from Botany Bay in Sydney. What do you know about the history of Botany Bay? You could read the article here: <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/convicts-and-the-british-colonies> and find out some facts about the First Fleet's arrival at Botany Bay.
2. Write a story cluster about the Stolen Generations based on what you have learnt during the story. A story cluster helps to record key aspects of the topic in any order. See **worksheet 1**.
3. Auntie Betty shared Indigenous stories of the beginning of time and the creation of all things. As she told the stories, Simon's understanding of her Aboriginal culture and heritage grew.

View an online version of the Creation Story here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vh6moD9ZOU> Alternatively, source a written version of the Creation Story at your local library. How can you visually represent the Creation Story? See **worksheet 2**.

History

Questions

1. Auntie Betty told Simon the story of her childhood, in which she was taken away from her family. Describe how the story made you feel. What questions would you ask Auntie Betty if you were Simon?
2. How does the text in the story explain who the Stolen Generations were and why they were taken?
3. Simon brought a newspaper to school that contained an article about former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's apology. View the speech by Kevin Rudd to the Parliament of Australia here: <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/our-country/our-people/apology-to-australias-indigenous-peoples>

What do you think about the apology? What do you feel? What questions do you have?

4. You can also view examples of how the print media reported the event by using this link: <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/politics/sorry-apology-to-stolen-generations#toc1> Simon had a newspaper with an article about the apology. What are the similarities and differences between the newspaper articles you have seen about the apology? (NB: The National Day of Healing, also known as National Sorry Day has been commemorated on 26 May since 1998, in response to community support for a national apology. The official apology was on 13 February 2008.)

Activities

1. Investigate the experiences of children who were taken from their families and placed into foster homes and orphanages. Make notes about the life of one member of the Stolen Generations on **worksheet 3**.
2. Using your notes, write a letter as a concerned citizen advocating for the member of the Stolen Generations you have researched to have contact with their family. An example of a letter that meets the appropriate standards for History within the Australian Curriculum can be found here: http://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/worksample/s/Year_6_History_Portfolio_Above.pdf

The Arts

Activities

1. View the illustration where Simon dreamt that the sorry word turned into a sorry cloud. It rained big, hard stones and on every stone was the word 'sorry'. Look at the illustration closely and examine all of the elements. Identify the character of Simon, sleeping. Look at the word 'sorry' written in the clouds and on the rainbow coloured sorry stones. Plan and create a class mural to display. You could make some sorry clouds first. Individually, create a sorry stone out of card. Students will decorate their sorry stone by colouring it in and writing the word 'sorry' on it. The sorry stone cards will be placed or hung under the clouds. The mural can be displayed in the classroom or an alternative location at the school. If possible, take a photograph and share the picture with the families.



2. The final illustration in the story symbolises healing and hope for the future. To represent this dream sequence, conduct the following ritual:

Collect a pile of stones. Students will cut out and colour a large star. The students will sit in a circle holding a stone. The stars are placed in the middle of the circle. Each student will place their stone in a basket in the centre of the circle and take a star. When everyone has a star, the basket of stones will be removed from the circle and the stars can be hung in the classroom. This symbolises the description of Aunty Betty throwing the stones into the night and the stones becoming stars and filling the sky. Discuss the meaning of the stones and the stars and highlight the concept of appreciating the past and being positive about the future.

Drawing or painting a picture in the style of the illustration is an appropriate follow-up activity.

3. Look at how illustrator Lauren Briggs developed one of the illustrations in the book, and answer the questions/activities on **worksheet 4**



WORKSHEET 1: A Story Cluster

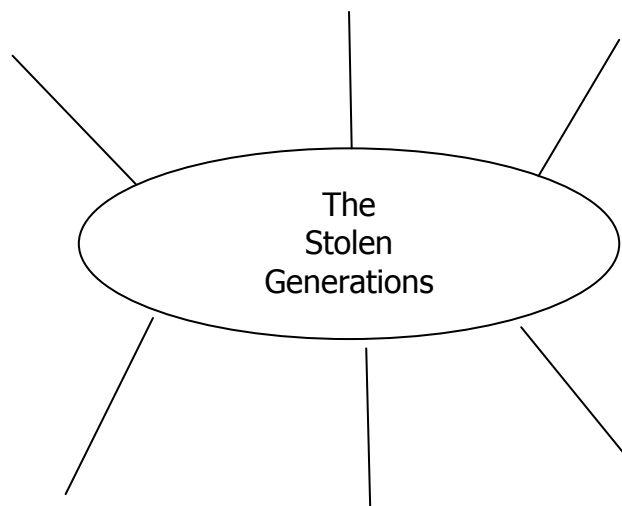
Book title:

Author:

Illustrator:

Write down anything that you have read about the Stolen Generations in *Stories for Simon* in the story cluster.

Write down as much as you can. The information could come from anywhere in the story.



WORKSHEET 2: Creation Story

View or read a version of an Australian Indigenous Creation Story.

Visually represent the story on this page using pictures and symbols.

Share your picture with others and retell the story using your picture to guide you.



WORKSHEET 3: Researching the Stolen Generations

Go to this link, and read about the stories of people from the Stolen Generation
<http://stolengenerationstestimonies.com/index.php/testimonies/index.1.html>

Choose one person to research. (Or teachers may wish to read a few testimonies and ask students to choose a subject from that selection.)

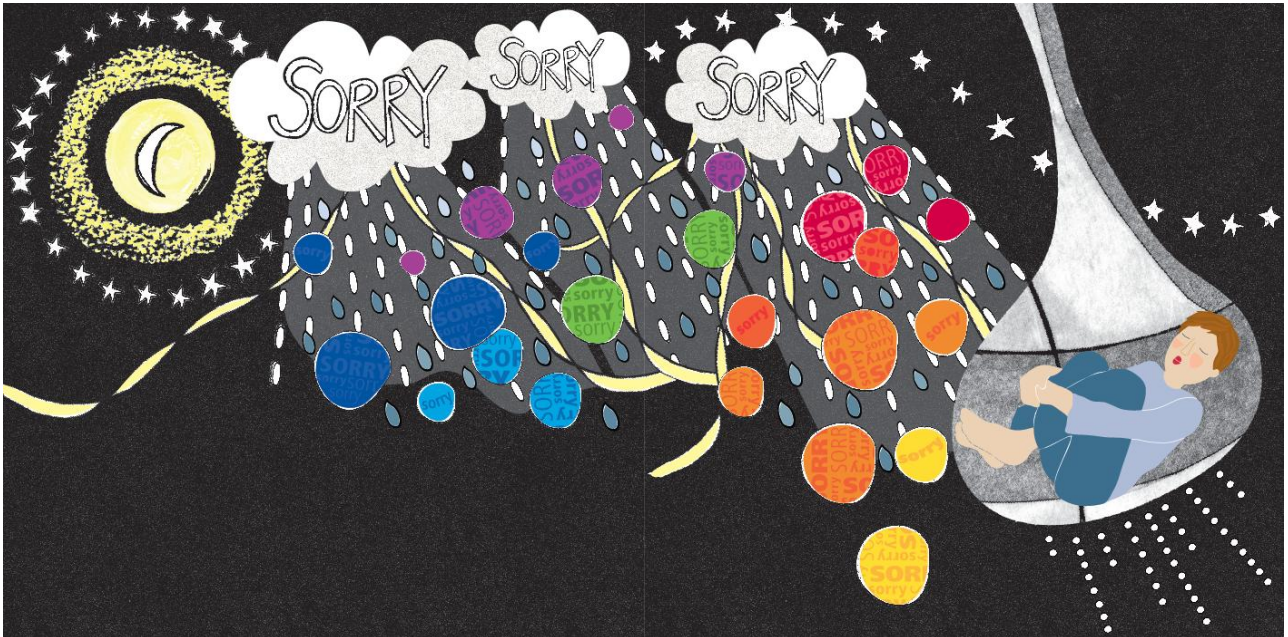
Write notes about the person in the boxes below.

Name: Details about the person: (date of birth, place of birth)
Their life with their family:
Removal from their family:
What happened next:



WORKSHEET 4: From idea to finished illustration

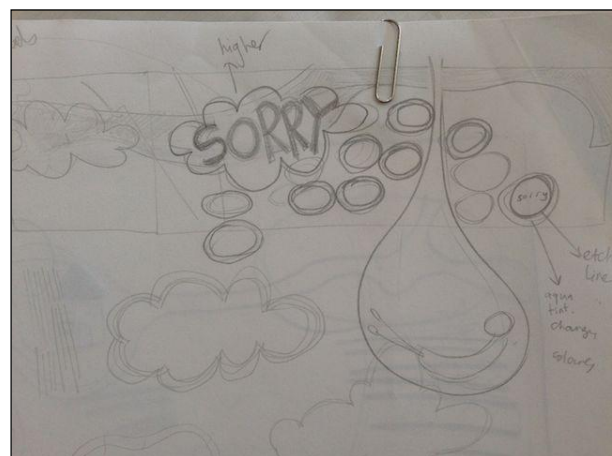
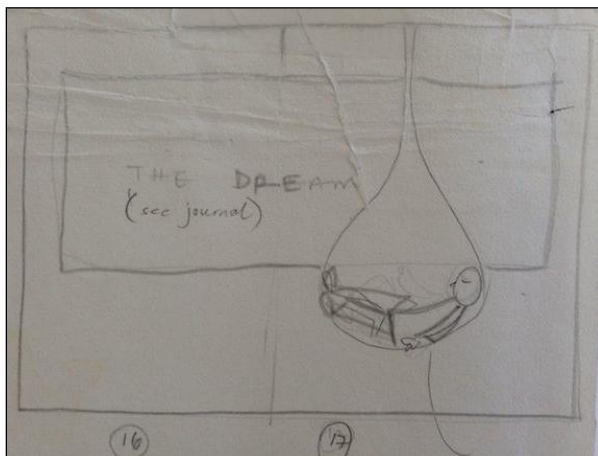
Here is a step-by-step look at the evolution of an illustration by Lauren Briggs in *Stories for Simon*.



Above is the final illustration that appears in the book. Illustrators make lots of decisions when illustrating a text. Should the illustration literally show what the text says? Can extra details or symbols be added? How will all of the illustrations fit together in the book? Will the same style appear throughout? The same symbols and colours? Most illustrations go through multiple stages of experimentation and drafting.

Sketches

The drawings below are examples of concept sketches. You can see that Lauren experimented with drawing different elements of the illustration.



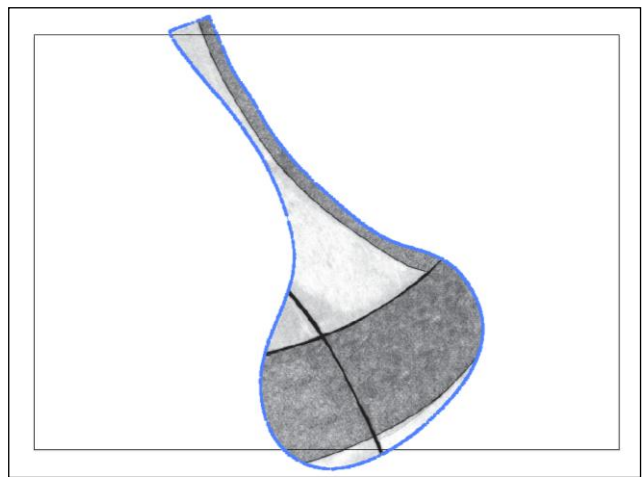
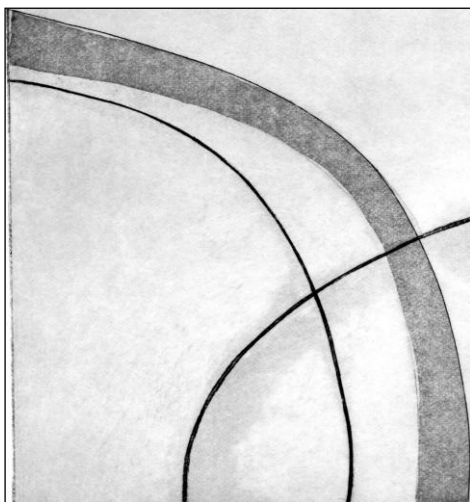
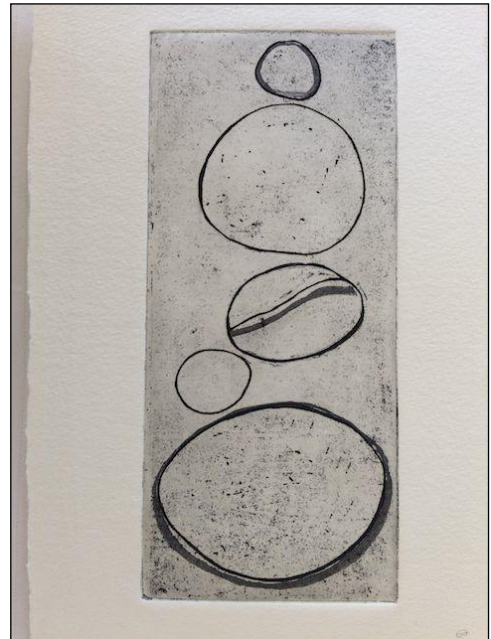
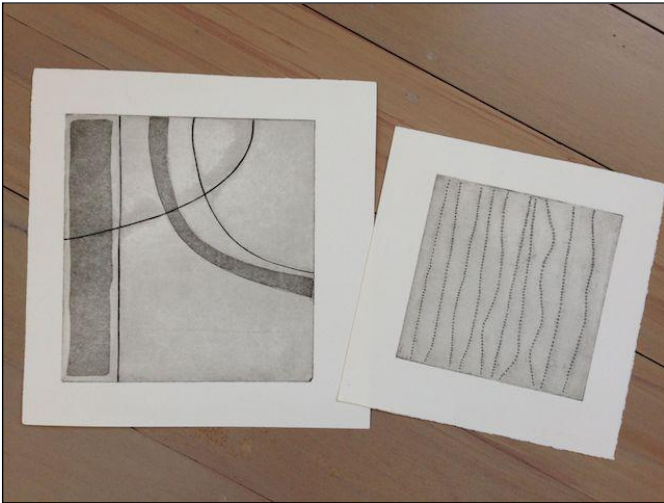
WORKSHEET 4 continued

Etches and scans

These are examples of Lauren's etchings, which were scanned and used to create the shapes and textures that appear in the book.

Questions

1. Can you identify the shapes in the image at the top-right in the final illustration?
2. The image at the bottom-right shows a scan of an etching being digitally manipulated. Can you find the shape outlined in blue in the final illustration?



WORKSHEET 4 continued

Drawing from models

Illustrators often look at models to make their illustrations look realistic. The illustrations in *Stories for Simon* are **stylised** rather than **literal**, but they are still modelled on how people really look and move.



Activities

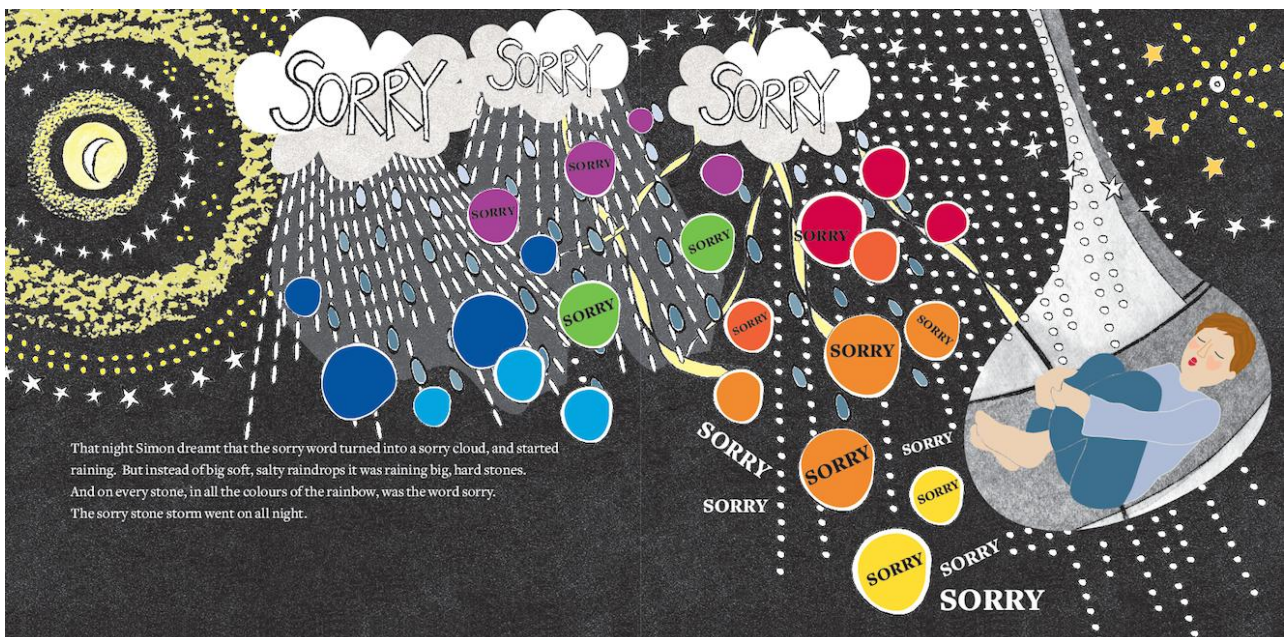
1. Find two illustrations of people from other books. In class or in groups, discuss whether you think they are 'literal' or 'stylised' representations.
2. In class, try to draw a portrait of a close family member from memory. At home, ask that family member to sit as a model so you can draw a new portrait of them. Are the two drawings very different?
3. *Extension discussion:* Consider the experiment with the portraits, and the difference between memories and experiencing something in real life. Can you relate this to the importance for Aunty Betty of being near her family and her traditional home?

Finalising an illustration

Once the different elements of an illustration have been created, they can be combined – either as a collage on paper or in mixed media, or digitally in programs such as Photoshop.

Questions

1. How does the version of the illustration below differ from the version you see at the start of this worksheet?
2. Why do you think those changes were made? Do you focus on different things in the different versions of the illustrations?



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QUANTITY	TOTAL
<i>Stories for Simon</i>	Sarzin and Briggs	9780857987440	1-6	24.99		
TOTAL						

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