



The Rainbow Serpent

James Vance Marshall



Summary

Story 1: The Rainbow Serpent wakes up in an empty world. She doesn't like this, so she produces rain and trees and flowers grow. Then she makes many animals and a man and a woman appear.

Story 2: One day, a Mother Kangaroo and her son, Joey, help an old wombat find food and water. The next morning, Mother Kangaroo finds a bag that the Great Creator had given her because she had been kind to another animal. Now, all baby kangaroos live in a bag on their mother's body.

Story 3: A lyrebird teaches a frog to sing. The frog begins to sing beautifully and he sings to the moon for a long time. Eventually, his voice disappears and he can only croak, as frogs do today.

Story 4: One day, the animals are arguing about who is the most special animal. They all say they have special things. The clever platypus says he does not want to be in any of the animals' families because the Great Creator told him that all animals are special.

Story 5: One day, an old cockatoo dies. The animals cannot understand it and some try to explain it. The caterpillars understand, as they turn into butterflies. The animals realise the dead cockatoo is new again and in a special place.

Story 6: A beautiful girl called Krubi is in love with a man called Bami who goes off to fight. He doesn't come back and Krubi dies. A red flower now grows in the mountains representing Krubi and her love.

Background and themes

The environment: The man and woman are told to look after the Earth by the Rainbow Serpent. The Earth

does not belong to any living thing on it but to all its inhabitants.

Love: Krubi's love for Bami was so strong that she could not live without him.

Spirituality: The Rainbow Serpent is a familiar story to the native people of Australia. They have a deep spiritual awareness.

Discussion activities

Before reading

- Write:** Ask students to write all the animals they know in English. Write the animals on the board. In small groups, the students play 'Twenty Questions'. Each student chooses an animal and the other students ask twenty 'yes', 'no' or 'sometimes' questions to guess the animal. Elicit possible questions first: *Is it big? Does it have four legs? Does it eat meat? Does it swim?*

Stories 1–2

While reading (p. 2, after 'Be good to the animals here.')

- Discuss:** Have students discuss the following questions in small groups: *Do you think there are many problems on the Earth? What are the problems? Are people making the world a bad place? Can people make the Earth a good place?*

After reading

- Group work and write:** Write *Where did the fish and the frogs go?* on the board and elicit the answer (Into the water). In small groups, students now write four questions about Stories 1–2. Check their work as they do this. Each group asks the other groups their questions.

Stories 3–4

After reading

- Pair work:** Student A chooses one of the pictures in Story 3 and describes the scene to Student B. Student B tries to draw the picture from Student A's description. Then they reverse roles and Student B chooses a picture from Story 4.

Stories 5–6

After reading

- Write:** Krubi's story is very sad. In pairs, the students discuss a film they have seen that is very sad. Then they write a short description of the films and read them to the class. Have the class guess the films.

Vocabulary activities

For the Word list and vocabulary activities, go to www.penguinreaders.com.