

DUSTS ECHOES

The Bat and the Butterfly

A **STUDYGUIDE** BY ROBERT LEWIS



www.metromagazine.com.au



www.theeducationshop.com.au

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Brief summary

A young man abducts a woman, and keeps her as a prisoner in a cave. Her family is not able to rescue her. As a final resort she turns into a butterfly and escapes. When her captor turns into a bat to chase her he is driven back into the cave by the hunters in the girl's family.

The theme is one of breaking the law, as well as explaining the origin of two creatures in a dramatic way.



The original story

This story is about a family living on the coastline. There are always Yirritja and Dhuwa families living together.

One day the men go hunting for food. Each man is told to go in a different direction.

One young man who goes out with the hunters is particularly skilled in fishing with his spear and woomera. One after the other he catches barramundi ... bang bang bang! ... three fish in no time!

A young Dhuwa girl is growing up in this clan. Her job is to feed and look after the elders and the children of the clan while the able-bodied men go out to hunt.

Like all people, sometimes we fall helplessly in love, and other times human desires get the better of us ... for when this young man returns early from his hunting trip with so much fish, he sees how this young Dhuwa girl takes his fish and cooks it. He watches her prepare it and serve it to the old people and the children, and when at last it comes time to serve food to him, he is filled with love and desire and grabs her hand and takes her away against her will.

Although he takes her away in full view of the clan the old people and children are helpless to do anything about it. He is a coward to act this way when the other young and strong men are away hunting.

He takes her to the hills, and they run and run until he finds a cave.

When the hunters come back, all the children and elders are distressed and grieving the loss of this caring and loving girl.

DUST TO ECHOES

They tell the other hunters that the young man has snatched her away.

So the hunters, in their anger and care for their sister and daughter, agree to try and find her by tracking their footsteps. They plan to confront him and spear him, to humble him.

They track their footsteps to the Cutta Cutta caves, a place where nobody goes.

The young man has built a wall of stones blocking the entrance of the cave, with just enough space to throw stones and spears through.

There is no way for the young girl to escape. The cave is her prison, and the man her jailer.

The hunters call out to the man to release the young girl. They attempt to pull down the stones but the man is so good with the spear and so good at throwing stones that he defeats them. They retreat back into the camp.

The young man continues to keep her there for his own pleasure. He is evil and cowardly.

He goes on seeking her affection, but she resists with screaming and crying. The poor girl wonders how she will possibly escape.

The hunters return to the cave and have a second attempt at freeing her but his spears and rocks are too powerful and they retreat once again.

It has been days now, and the young man continues to seek her affections but this time, instead of her usual resistance and screaming, she agrees to allow him to rest his head on her lap. He falls into a deep sleep and she tries to lift his head from her lap, but is unable to

without the threat of waking him up.

So she musters all of her inner power and the spirits and transforms herself into a black crow butterfly. This way she can fly out of the cave through the cracks the young man made for his stones and spears.

The young man eventually awakes to find himself alone and hungry with hardly any campfire left. He runs to the cave entrance as night time falls. There is no escape from his prison, the wall he built is immovable. His fate is imminent. Even if he ever got out he would be killed by the rest of the clan. And so he is transformed into a bat!

This is why there are always bats inside caves and butterflies on the outside and why you must be careful when you are near the caves.

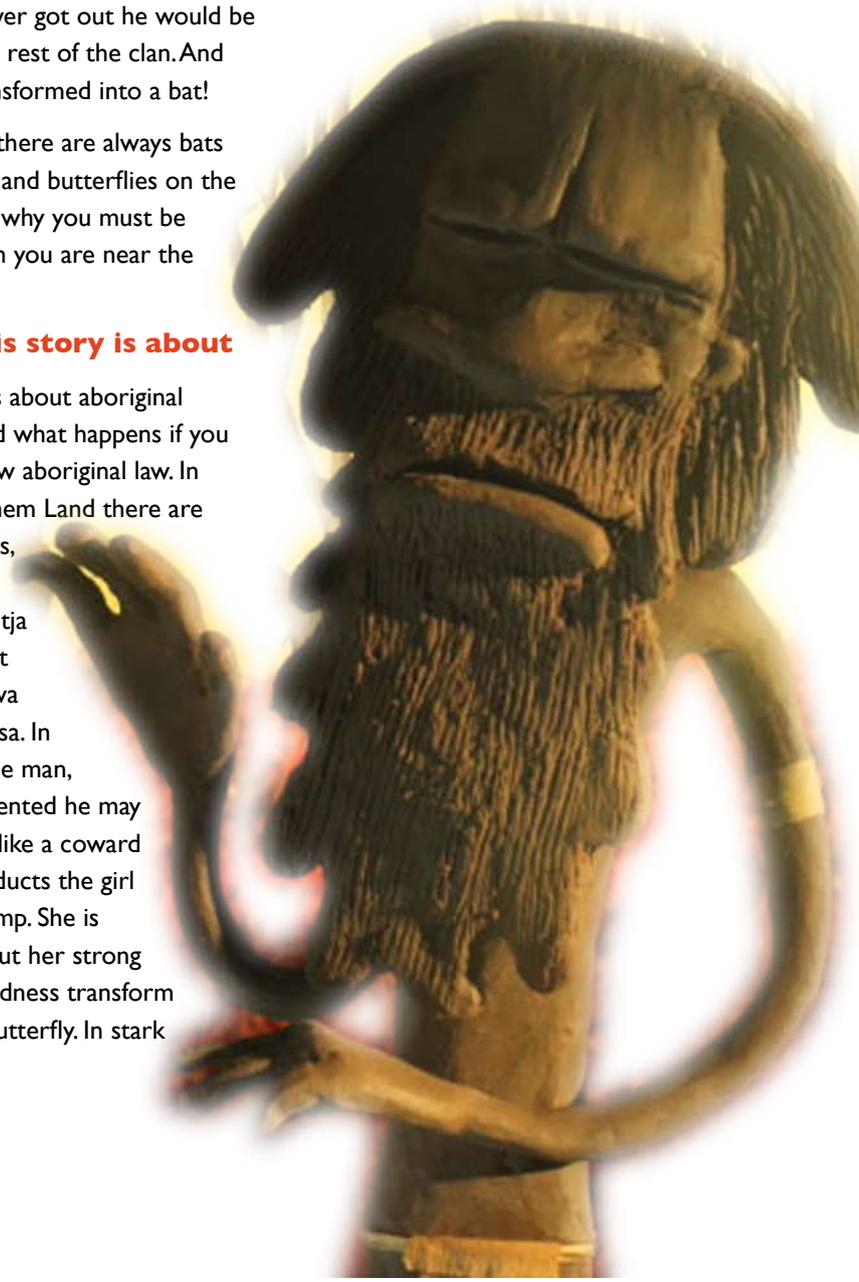
What this story is about

This story is about aboriginal moieties and what happens if you do not follow aboriginal law. In central Arnhem Land there are two moieties, Yirritja and Dhuwa. Yirritja families must marry Dhuwa and vice versa. In this story the man, however talented he may be, behaves like a coward when he abducts the girl from the camp. She is powerless but her strong will and goodness transform her into a butterfly. In stark

contrast, the man – who was once admired by the camp – is banished to live as a bat forever in the darkness.

Where this story comes from

The Bat and The Butterfly is a Dhuwa story that is told in Rittharngu language in Central Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Australia.



DUST ECHOES

Suggested classroom activities

Introducing the story

1 Tell the students the original story. Ask them to create a rough storyboard setting out how they would tell the story themselves. Students then watch the film.

OR

Have the students reorganize the summary sentences on the Student Worksheet to tell a coherent story. Students then watch the film.

Understanding the story

2 Now have students answer the comprehension questions on the Student Worksheet (Questions 1-3), or from the online quiz.

Finding meanings, reflection and analysis

3 Students can now discuss the themes and issues set out in questions 4-9, including their analysis of how the filmmakers use the medium to tell the story.

Follow-up activities

4 Teachers can select from the activities list in the *What is ... 'Dust Echoes'* study guide to suggest appropriate follow-up activities for this story.

The theme is one of breaking the law, as well as explaining the origin of two creatures in a dramatic way.



STUDENT WORKSHEET

Title: *The Bat and the Butterfly*

Sorting out the story

1 Here is a summary of the story. But it is mixed up. Rearrange the sentences and number them 1-6 so that they tell the story in the correct sequence or order.



Order No. Summary

	He takes her to a secret place that others cannot enter.
	Her captor turns into a bat that will eat the butterfly, but the family members drive him off.
	She, however, escapes by becoming a butterfly.
	The woman's family looks for her, but are not able to help her.
	Then, suddenly, a man drags away one of the women in the group.
	We see a happy family group.

Understanding what this story is about

2 Here are some more questions about the story. To answer these, you will sometimes need to look carefully at how the animators have depicted the scene.

- How do we know this is a good and right-behaving community?
- How do we know the man is doing the wrong thing?
- How do we know that the woman does not agree to be taken away?
- How do we know that the girl has defeated the man at the end?

Understanding what this story means

3 Aboriginal stories may exist to:

- teach young people about natural events
- warn them about dangers
- explain relationships and identity
- teach them about the law and right behaviour

Which of these is *The Bat and the Butterfly* trying to achieve? Give reasons to support your answer.

4 The stories are also about ideas. Write one sentence to explain what this story tells us about each of these:

- Love
- Belonging
- The strength of family and country
- Duties and responsibilities
- Journeys

STUDENT WORKSHEET CONTINUED

5 You will probably never see a butterfly again without thinking about this story. How does using natural and everyday animals and insects help get across a message effectively? Create your own story about some animal you know well – such as how the dog got its tail, or the cat its purr.

What does the story help us understand about Aboriginal people's lives?

6 What does the film help us understand about any of these topics or aspects of traditional Aboriginal life and society?

- Food
- Work
- Family
- Society
- Law and rules
- Duties
- Spiritual/religious beliefs
- Education
- Technology (tools and weapons)
- Relationships with others
- Roles
- Emotions.

Write one sentence for any of these that you think is touched on in the story.

Understanding how the story has been told

7 What were your reactions or feelings during the story?

8 You had these reactions and feelings not only because of the story itself, but also the way the story was told and shown to you.

Here are some of the elements or parts of a film that can influence you. Divide them among your group, and have group members report back on them.

- The film's **graphic style** – What do the people look like? What does the background look like? What colours are used?
- The film's use of **music** – Is it traditional Aboriginal music or modern music? How does the music influence your reactions? Is it effective?

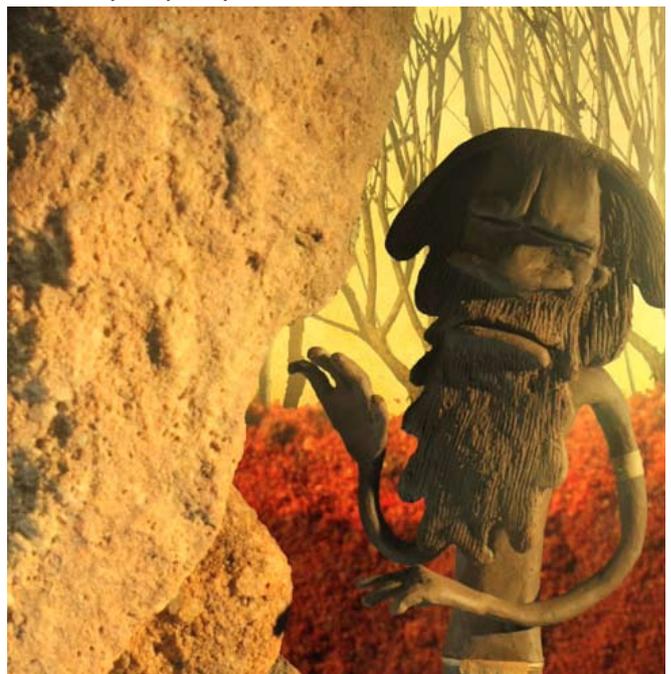
- What **other sounds** are in the film – Are natural sounds used? Is there any other sound, such as people's voices?
- The use of **viewpoint** – There is no camera filming the action in each story, but you can see the artists presenting the images as if there is. What are the 'camera' angles that are used? Does the 'camera' remain at ground level, or does it change angles? Does it move? What is the effect or impact of changing our viewpoint as we watch the film?
- **Narration** – Some of the stories have a narrator. What sort of voice is it? How does the narrator tell the story? Does he just speak, or are there other elements that he includes? Is it effective?

Applying the story to your life

9 *Dust Echoes is one way that we are bringing everyone back to the same campfire – black and white. We are telling our stories to you in a way you can understand, to help you see, hear and know. And we are telling these stories to ourselves, so that we will always remember, with pride, who we are.*

– Tom E. Lewis, Djilpin Arts Aboriginal Corporation.

The makers of the story want it to be a part of your life. Do you think the story has any relevance to your life today? Explain your ideas.



DUSTS
ECHOES



This study guide was produced by **ATOM** ©ATOM 2007
editor@atom.org.au

For more information on **SCREEN EDUCATION** magazine, or to download other free study guides,
visit www.metromagazine.com.au

For hundreds of articles on Film as Text, Screen Literacy, Multiliteracy and Media Studies,
visit www.theeducationshop.com.au

Notice: An educational institution may make copies of all or part of this study guide, provided that it only makes and uses copies as reasonably required for its own educational, non-commercial, classroom purposes and does not sell or lend such copies.