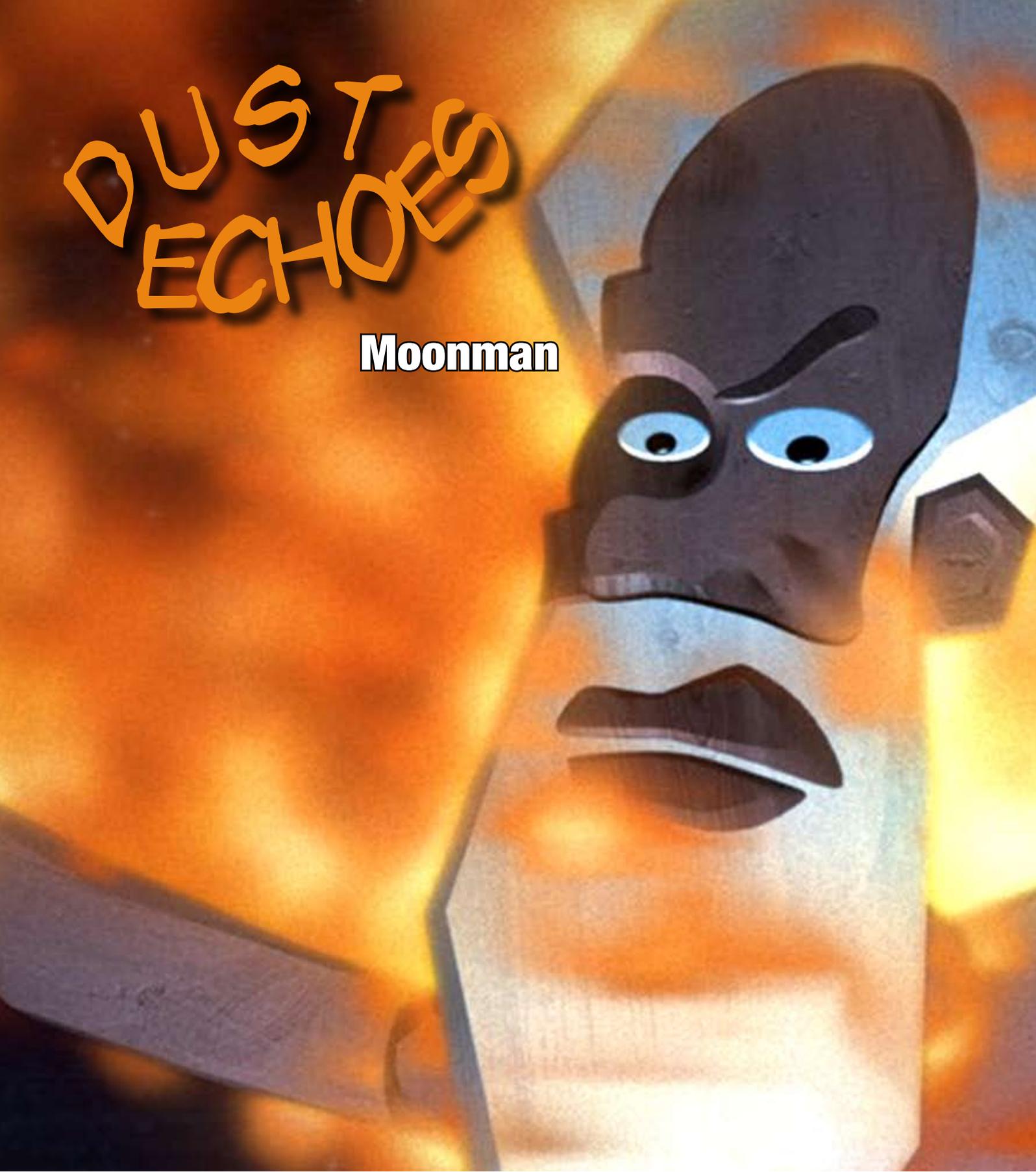


DUSTS ECHOES

Moonman



A **STUDYGUIDE** BY ROBERT LEWIS



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TEACHER'S GUIDE

Brief summary

Moonman tells the story of two brothers who were selfish and inconsiderate, and who were killed by their father as punishment. In turn, the man's wives killed him by fire.

This story is a creation myth that tells us about the origin of the moon and its monthly cycle.

The original story

Before the moon was a moon in the sky, the moon was a man. He had two wives and 2 sons. He built a big round paperbark house with four doors for his family. It was moon-like, as if the moon had sunk into the ground.



His wives used to go out and gather bush tucker. They gathered yams and berries and plums. This was their staple diet and everyone was happy.

When the sons were teenagers they approached their father and announced, 'Dad, we are going to go out hunting for you!'

Moonman felt so happy. What a wonderful thing for his sons to offer. He felt so good in his heart: 'My beautiful grown up sons. What a wonderful thing for them to do.' He felt he had raised them the right way, raised them so well.

So off they go hunting and they get to a big billabong. And they catch all kinds of fish from that billabong. They light a fire in the traditional way (no matches back then) and they wait until it turns to coals and then they cook a huge pile of fish.

But, instead of taking the fish back to their father and their mothers, they have a big ol' feed! They took back only the bony bits ... no flesh at all!

Dad, who was feeling so good about the boys going hunting, is in dismay and says to the kids, 'Hey what's this? You've brought me back just the bones!! What am I supposed to do with these?'

The boys quickly say, 'Hey, don't worry dad, we will go back, only this time we will make it right. We will not fail you this time!'

So off they go again to the billabong and get a big mob of fish. They have a great time but they do exactly the same thing. In their greed and disrespect they forget about their oath to their father and cook and eat all the fish for a second time!

They bring back just the bones yet again to their dad! They say, 'Father!

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Here's your feed'. Moonman looks at his sons. He is dark. He is furious for they have brought him back only the bones yet again! This time he says nothing, but Moonman devises a plan.

Moonman makes a big traditional style fishing trap, with but-but (Kurrajong) bark. He tells the boys that next time they go fishing they should use this fish net.

So, they go down with their father to the great billabong, and take the fishing trap with them. The trap is big enough for a huge catch. While his sons are not watching, Moonman gets a big old stick and beats the boys – they get a huge hiding! The beating kills the two boys dead!

Moonman stuffs his sons' bones into the fishing trap and throws them in the billabong.

The next day, the women come back from collecting bush tucker and realize their boys are not back from fishing so they ask Moonman where they are.

Moonman says, 'Aah, yes, they went hunting at the billabong and took a big fishing trap with them. I don't know why they are not back. They are gone! I don't know where they are!'

So, the women go out to the billabong. It's turning dark now but they see the fish trap in the water, and they see blood.

They pull the trap out of the water and see their two dead sons in there!

They cry and cry. They hit and cut themselves with a rock and stick to express their grief and anger, traditional-way. They know the Moonman has done this to their sons.

The women bust open the fish-net and each takes their son out. They carry their broken bodies back to the camp, back to the paper-bark hut and lay them down outside the hut where the Moonman cannot see them.

Later, Moonman comes back to the hut. It is night time and he goes into the hut to sleep. The women stay up and watch him.

The women wait until he is in a deep sleep and then they set fire to the hut at each of the four doors. The hut lights up and glows like a burning moon! Moonman wakes up. It's like a furnace in there. But it's too late and he too catches fire.

He tries to climb up a tree to escape, but he falls down! Moonman cannot climb up the ghost gum either, and so, eventually, he finds a pandanus. He stands on top of the pandanus tree and screams out to his wives, 'When you die, you die forever – when I die, I am going to come back immortal every month!'

Then, Moonman transforms into the moon and rises above the pandanus tree and this is why the moon rises in full every month above the pandanus trees.



What this story is about

This story explains the origins of the moon and why it rises full each month. The moon is a reminder of the anger felt by the father at his sons' disrespect, but also the anger of the women at the way Moonman dealt with their sons. This is a cycle of violence that is represented by the cycles of the moon and teaches people to listen and respect the wishes of others.

Where this story comes from

Moonman is a Dhuwa story that is told in Rittharngu language in Central Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Australia.

Suggested classroom activities

Introducing the story

I 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.

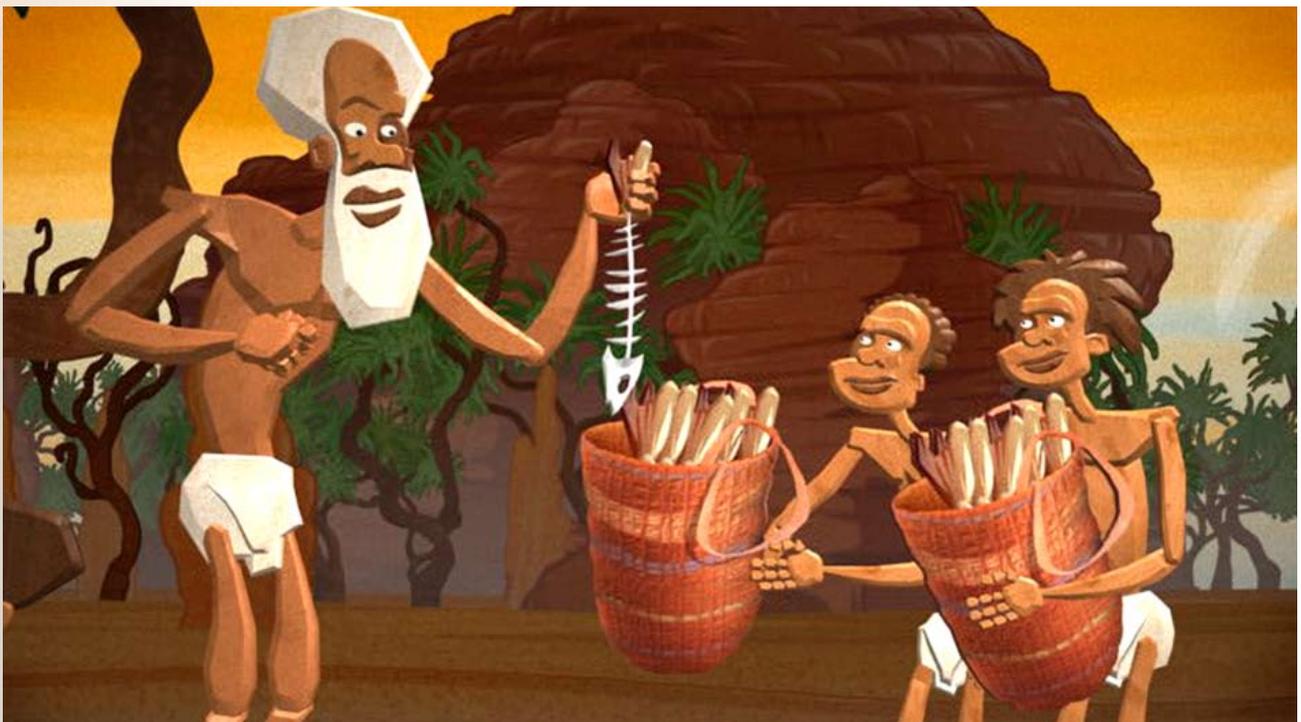
Finding meanings, reflection and analysis

3 Students can now discuss the themes and issues set out in questions 5-8, 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.

This story is a creation myth that tells us about the origin of the moon and its monthly cycle.



STUDENT WORKSHEET

Title: *Moonman*

Sorting out the story

Here is a summary of the story. But it is mixed up. Rearrange the sentences and number them 1-10 so that they tell the story in the correct sequence or order.



Order No. Summary

	But they do not bring the fish home – they eat them all and bring back only the bones.
	He builds a fish trap and sends them back to fish.
	He traps them in the fish trap and beats them to death.
	However, they go back the next day and do the same thing – catch fish, and eat them all.
	The boys' mothers go looking, and find their dead sons.
	The father says that he will not disappear, but will come back every month as a full moon.
	Their father determines to punish them.
	Their father is furious with them, but forgives them when they promise not to do it again.
	They realize that the father has killed the boys, and they set fire to the campsite, burning him alive.
	Two young men go fishing, and are very successful.

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.

- What is the problem when the boys go fishing for the first time?
- Why does the father get so upset about this?
- How do the boys behave the second time they go fishing?
- What does the father do about this?
- Do you think this is a reasonable reaction?
- Do you think the women's revenge is an appropriate thing to do?
- We are not meant to learn that killing people is appropriate. What is the message that we are meant to learn from this story?

STUDENT WORKSHEET CONTINUED

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 *Moonman* 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:

- Law
- Punishment
- Violence
- Revenge
- Duty
- Anger.

5 *Moonman* is a story about rights and responsibilities. It is also a story about revenge and violence. Are there any other stories about revenge and violence in other stories that you learned as a child? Do you think these are good themes to explore with children through stories?

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.

DUSTIES ECHOES



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