

DUSTS ECHOES

Namorrodor

A **STUDYGUIDE** BY ROBERT LEWIS



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TEACHER'S GUIDE

Brief summary

*The Namorrodor
is a Dreamtime
beast that eats
childrens hearts.*

The main theme of this story is to beware of dangers at night around the camp fire.



The original story

The legend of the Namorrodor is handed down by grandparents through many generations. The presence of Namorrodor, a flying serpent and a man-eater, is signalled by a shooting star in the night sky.

Namorrodor lives in a cave and goes hunting at night for food. At dusk it begins moving in the cave, preparing to go out hunting. It makes noise like wind, it has claws and a head like a kangaroo or horse.

Meat must never be cooked at night, because Namorrodor smells it, meat attracts it to the camp. It hides in the bushes watching, moving closer by jumping from tree to tree.

Namorrodor's favourite prey is small babies, when it finds them it rips out their heart and takes it away.

Babies that sleep in the bush always lie face down or sideways to protect their hearts. They are always well covered.

When a shooting star is seen in the night sky, it signals to people that someone has died.

What this story means

Namorrodor is a shooting star. It transforms into a terrifying spirit creature that hunts for babies. It is known to eat their hearts. Two of this story's main messages are that babies should not sleep unprotected in the bush, and that meat should not be cooked on the fire at night.

The smell of meat cooking at night attracts Namorrodor, as well as centipedes, scorpions, ants and other biting insects. The story is told to children to encourage them to behave and go to sleep.

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It is said that the only person who can kill Namorrodor is a medicine man (or witchdoctor) who has as much strength as the spirit creature. This man can only kill Namorrodor at a certain time of the night, and with a spear which has been shaped over a fire while certain words are sung. It is also said that when Namorrodor dies it makes a terrible scream.

Where this story comes from

Namorrodor is an ancient story that is told throughout the Arnhem Land region.

The Namorrodor story is told by Pamela Weston. Pamela lives in the Wugularr Community in the Katherine Region of Australia's Northern Territory. She was told the story by her step-father.

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.



STUDENT WORKSHEET

Title: *Namorrodor*

Sorting out the story

1 Here is a summary of the story. But it is mixed up. Rearrange the sentences and number them 1-5 so that they tell the story in the correct sequence or order.

Order No. **Summary**

	A shooting star is seen in the night – a sign that somebody has died.
	A young boy goes to cook meat at night, but his mother stops him.
	Namorrodor is a dangerous beast that is signaled by a shooting star.
	The mother makes sure that her baby sleeps on its side, so that the Namorrodor cannot attack it.
	The Namorrodor hunts at night.

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 sign tells people that the Namorrodor is around?
- What is the Namorrodor?
- When does it hunt?
- How does the Namorrodor know that people are around?
- Why does the mother make her baby sleep on its side?
- How can the Namorrodor be killed?

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 *Namorrodor* 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:

- Fear
- Danger
- Evil

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STUDENT WORKSHEET CONTINUED

5 *Namorrodor* is a scary story. Scary stories are common in fairy tales. Find another example of a scary story that is told to children. Why would people want to scare children?

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.



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