

DUSTS ECHOES

Spear



A **STUDYGUIDE** BY ROBERT LEWIS



www.metromagazine.com.au



www.theeducationshop.com.au

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Brief summary

A man in a family group envies another man's magical spear. He tries to steal the spear, but is caught and punished, and then brought back into the group.

The message is that wrong deeds must be punished, but the punishment brings redemption.



The original story

A man makes a spear. Like all spears, it has a woomera used to throw it. The woomera itself can also be used as a weapon.

This spear is no ordinary spear. It is made from the magic of the trees. The magical trees provide wood to carve the spear and sap to bind the spear to the spear head.

The man uses the spear both to protect his family and to hunt. When he throws the magic spear, it has the power of seven spears. It can travel through the air and kill seven fish in a single throw. The spear casts seven shadows ... It takes a man with sharp eyes to detect which is the real spear.

This man becomes the keeper of the sacred spear, and he is respected for it.

A witchdoctor-man becomes jealous of the magic spear keeper. He wants the magic spear for himself and is envious of spear-man's power and influence!

The witchdoctor-man tries to steal the magic spear so he can gain popularity and power.

One day our spear-man goes out on a hunting journey with his magic spear.

The witchdoctor-man uses the spear-man's absence to his advantage by seizing the opportunity to steal the dilly bag of one of the elder women. In this dilly bag is great power!

The witchdoctor-man reaches into the dilly bag and gains great power. He swiftly becomes high and mighty and threatens the people with his new powers. He becomes dictatorial and demanding.

Eventually, the spear-man returns to

see the camp transformed by the witchdoctor-man. Witchdoctor-man confronts the spear-man and his magic spear.

He believes his stolen powers are far stronger than spear-man's magic spear because witchdoctor-man has the elements in his control.

Witchdoctor-man conjures lightning-bolt spears of his own and throws them at the spear-man. To witchdoctor-man's horror, the bolts of lightning are deflected one by one by the magic spear-man's woomera.

Witchdoctor-man loses confidence because the spear-man is getting closer with each step. Finally, the spear-man catches the lightning-bolt spear – the ultimate sign of defeat.

The spear-man threatens the witchdoctor with his magic spear, which casts seven shadows. Witchdoctor-man pleads for mercy and forgiveness.

He is granted mercy on one condition – that he receive seven spear wounds to the leg with the magic spear. If he accepts this punishment, the camp must by law forgive him completely as if he had never done anything wrong.

Witchdoctor-man accepts the punishment which releases the powers he stole and sends them back to the dilly bag.

The people celebrate the return of peace to the camp and witchdoctor's show of humility with a corroboree.

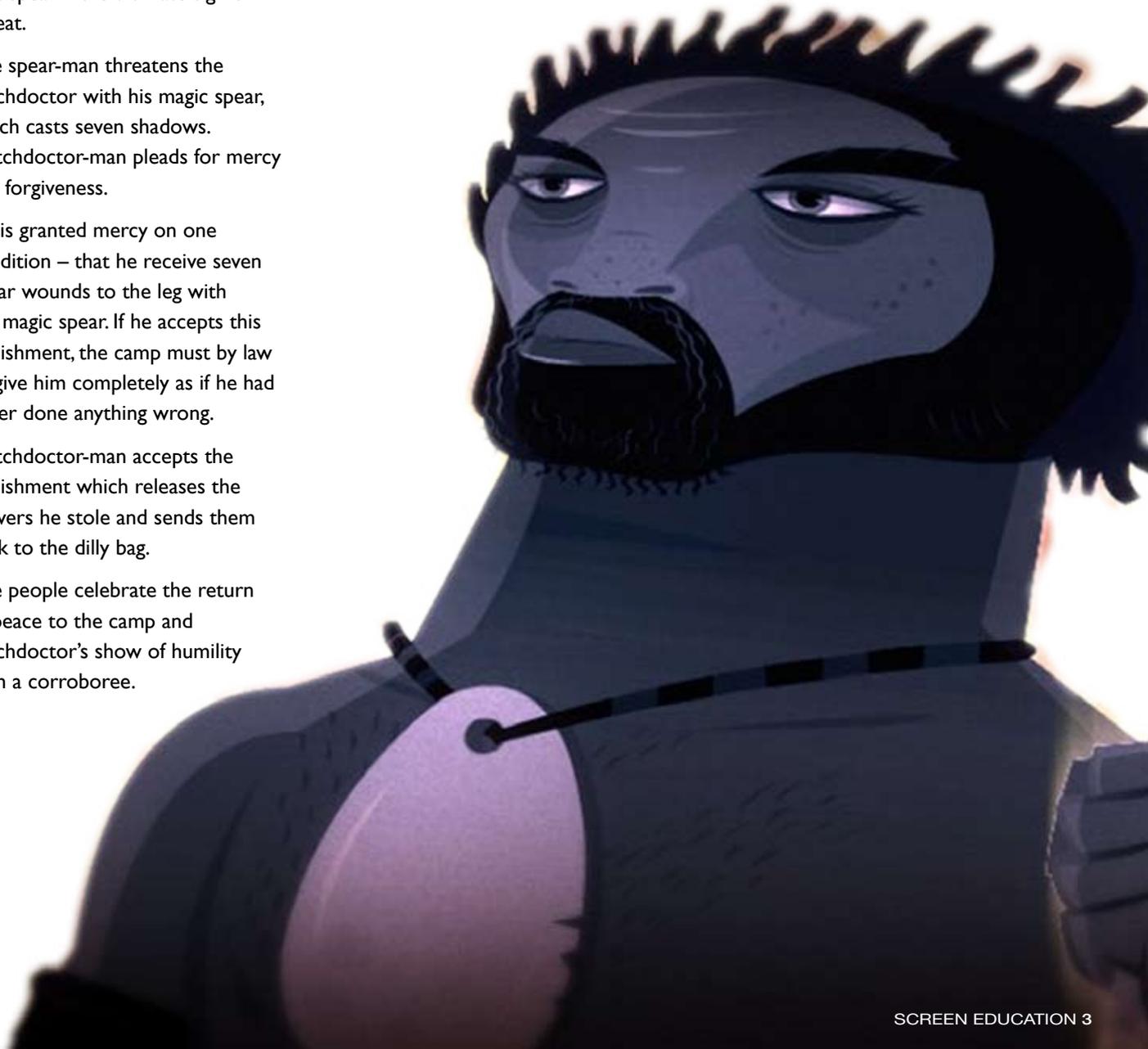
DUST TO ECHOES

What this story means

This story is about the destructive nature of envy and jealousy. The witchdoctor man is so full of envy of the magic spear keeper that he forgets to respect the rest of the community. This is a particularly important philosophy when living in a communal society and decisions must be made by the group rather than the individual in order to take into account everyone's needs and strengths.

Where this story comes from

Spear is a Yirritja story that is told in Dalabon language in Central Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Australia.



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

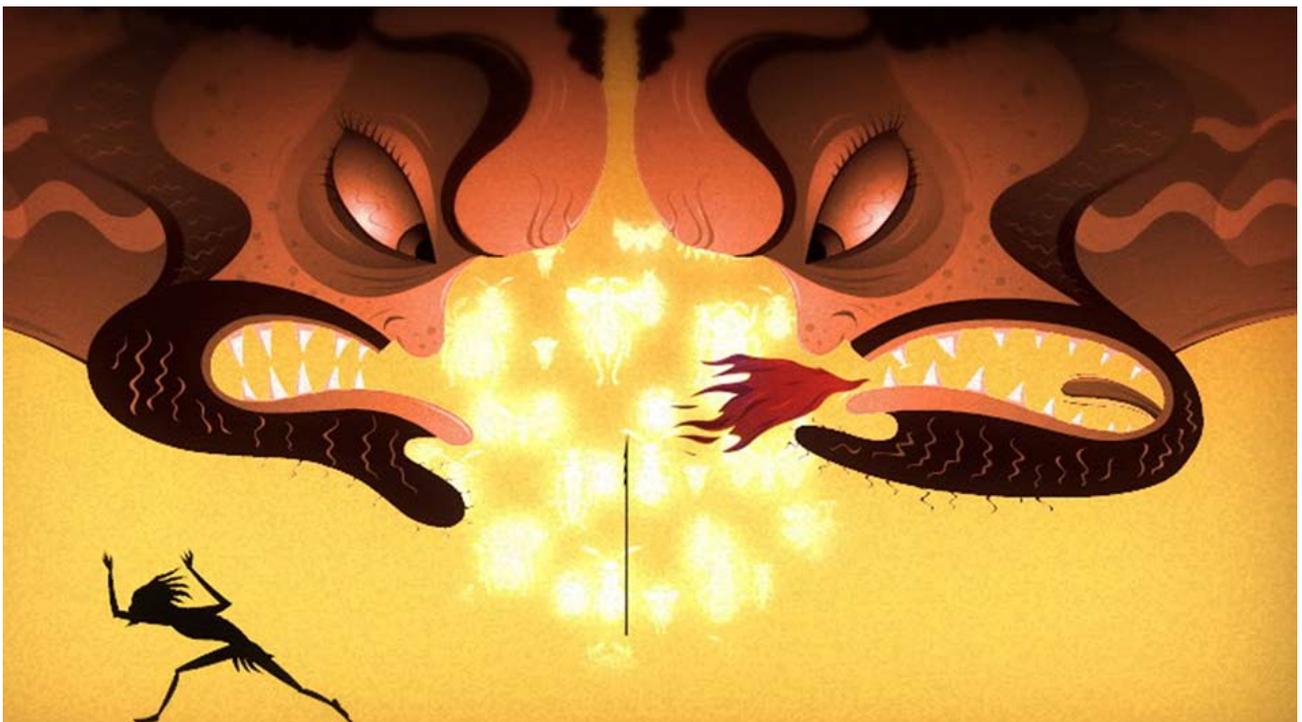
3 Students can now discuss the themes and issues set out in questions 4-9, including their analysis of how the filmmakers use the medium to tell the story.

DUST ECHOES

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 message is that wrong deeds must be punished, but the punishment brings redemption.



STUDENT WORKSHEET

Title: *Spear*

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**

	A great hunter is very successful at catching fish and animals.
	After his punishment the guilty man is able to be part of the group again.
	He brings them back and feeds his group.
	He punishes the guilty man.
	One of the group is envious of his ability, and tries to steal the hunter's spear.
	The hunter is able to stop this.

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 the spear is magical and special?
- How do we know that the man who tries to steal the spear is doing the wrong thing?
- How do we know that he is evil?
- How do we know that the hunter is stronger than the thief?
- How do we know that the evil feelings and attitudes in the man have been destroyed?
- Does the man accept his punishment, or is it forced on him? How can you tell?
- How do we know that the thief has changed and will not do it again?

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 *Spear* 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:

- Power
- Envy
- Punishment/law
- Community



STUDENT WORKSHEET CONTINUED

5 Spear tells us about redemption – being forgiven and accepted back by somebody we have hurt. This happens when we apologise or say sorry if we have done something wrong. Make up a short poem about saying sorry.

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.