

TEACHERS' NOTES

by Joy Lawn

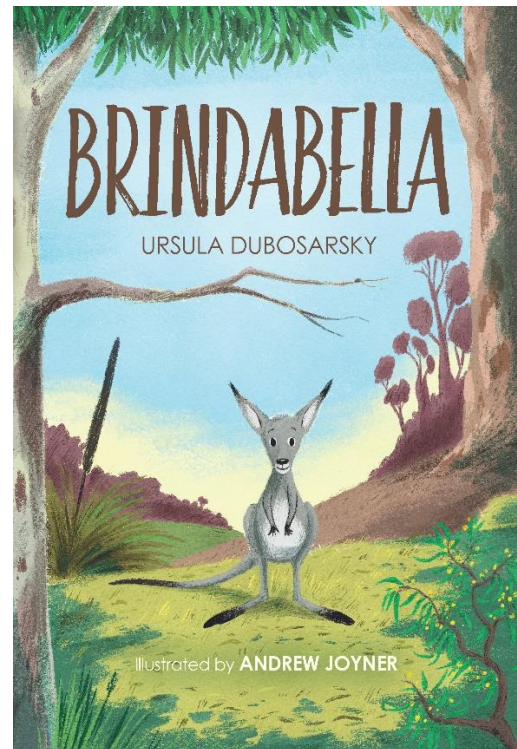
Brindabella

by
Ursula Dubosarsky,
illustrated by **Andrew Joyner**

ISBN 9781760112042
Recommended for ages 8-12 yrs

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83 Alexander Street
Crows Nest, Sydney
NSW 2065
Australia

PO Box 8500
St Leonards
NSW 1590
Australia

ph: (61 2) 8425 0100
fax: (61 2) 9906 2218

info@allenandunwin.com
www.allenandunwin.com

Allen & Unwin PTY LTD
ABN 79 003 994 278

INTRODUCTION

Brindabella is an intriguing, unpredictable novel for mid- and upper-primary. It is written in short chapters with well-chosen, sensory vocabulary. Some conventions of writing structure are subverted because we meet the boy character, Pender, before meeting the titular character, kangaroo joey, Brindabella.

The novel opens with a sense of mystery, derived from sensory descriptions of place, particularly the wall of trees behind which Pender finds Brindabella. From there, the tale seems to become a more conventional narrative about raising a joey, but reader expectations are further confounded when Brindabella and the other animals begin to speak to each other. In most circumstances, the reader would know that the animals speak from the beginning, not further into a story. The narrative also moves between Pender and Brindabella's point of view.

Brindabella has application for the subjects of English, Science, HASS, Music and Visual Arts.

TOPICS AND THEMES

- Belonging and freedom
- Australian bush and wildlife, particularly kangaroos
- Animals in captivity vs the wild
- Domestic pets and farm animals
- Friendship
- Family
- Art
- How to be a good man

PLOT SUMMARY

Pender lives a quiet life with his artist father in an old house by the river in a hidden bushland valley with numerous farm animals and a faithful dog, Billy-Bob. He decides to explore further into the valley and witnesses the shooting of a kangaroo. He takes the orphan joey, Brindabella, home to rear. She becomes his shadow although she does demonstrate a willful and adventurous streak before finally concocting a plan with Billy-Bob to escape.

Although Brindabella's time alone in the bush can be isolating and confronting, she prefers to be wild and free. She looks for adventures but wonders why the other kangaroos avoid her. She is helped by a wombat and is later caught in a trap.

Meanwhile, Pender misses Brindabella but is comforted by faithful Billy-Bob. He also discovers how ill his father is.

Both narratives intersect in a shocking scene when the hunters reappear.

CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT

LEARNING AREAS OF THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

ENGLISH

The suggested English Learning Intentions are from the three strands of the Australian English curriculum.

- **Literature:** understanding, appreciating, responding to, analysing and creating literature
- **Language:** knowing about the English language
- **Literacy:** expanding the repertoire of English usage

The Learning Intentions are either from one strand or integrated strands.

SCIENCE

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

- Geography

THE ARTS

- Visual Arts
- Music

GENERAL CAPABILITIES AND CROSS CURRICULAR PRIORITIES

The activities and discussions in these notes can be aligned with the following:

General Capabilities

- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Capability
- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Ethical Understanding

Cross-curriculum Priority

- Sustainability

Learning Intentions are highlighted in shaded boxes at the end of the section to which they refer and are from English, Science, HASS, Music and Visual Arts.

The Australian Curriculum can be accessed at <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Home>.

ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASSROOM

ORIENTATION / SETTING

Bushland Setting

The bushland setting is an integral part of *Brindabella*. To enable students to experience this, find a place where there is some bush. It may be part of a State Forest, nearby bushland or a bushy area within a local park or the school playground.

Sensory Writing

In advance, students select and prepare passages set in the bushland described in *Brindabella* which they will read aloud in small groups in the bush setting. [Chapters 2 & 3 are a good starting place.]

Students highlight the words from the text that engage the senses.

Senses and Sensory Wheel

Students look, listen and use other senses to note the sounds, sights and other features of the bush and record sights, sounds, smells, feel/touch, taste (where safe) on a sensory wheel (see Black Line Master 1).

They then use coloured highlighters to note and record where the author's sensory images about the bush coincide or overlap with the students' experiences.

Assessment Tasks:

1) Students create literary texts by selecting one of the senses to focus on. They write a brief sensory description of the bush using language generated from both their own experiences in the bush and the author's writing in *Brindabella*.

Write this description onto a piece of paperbark (if accessible without causing damage to trees) or onto recycled paper or wrapping or scrapbooking paper that emulates the colour, content or texture of the description. (NB. Paperbark is also available from some kitchen suppliers.)

2) Students create a short free-form poem based on a picture or photo of the Australian bush. Each line describes the poem's topic in terms of one sense. (What does it look like? What does it smell like? etc.) These lines are most effective if expressed as metaphors, though similes also work. Students may see a unifying metaphor emerge from all six lines, or may re-draft to achieve this effect. Lines can be reordered for maximum dramatic effect. Present the finished poem with the picture or photo of the landscape feature being described.

Discuss how language is used to describe the settings in texts, and explore how the settings shape the events and influence the mood of the narrative (ACELT1599 - Scootle)

Create literary texts that experiment with structures, ideas and stylistic features of selected authors. (ACELT1798 - Scootle)

Create literary texts that explore students' own experiences and imagining (ACELT1607 - Scootle)

Understand, interpret and experiment with sound devices and imagery, including simile, metaphor and personification, in narratives, shape poetry, songs, anthems and odes (ACELT1611 - Scootle)

Soundscape

The author uses the expressions, “music of the bush”, page 119, and “music in the breeze”, page 122.

Discuss what these could refer to.

While in the bush, students listen to and identify bush sounds.

In small groups, they create a soundscape by listing 5 of the sounds and recording these. Download the free recording tool Audacity to create soundscapes <http://www.audacityteam.org/download/>.

To reiterate the first point in this section about “music of the bush”, again discuss the author’s term, “music of the bush” to see if the students can extend or deepen their insights after having listened closely to the bush and created soundscapes.

Extension Task:

Teachers who wish to incorporate the Music curriculum and its elements of music, such as duration, pitch and tone colour, could refer to the videos by Katie Burke from USQ, beginning with ‘Listening to a Soundscape’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5s7FxE64bA>.

She takes children from listening to outdoor sounds (natural and made), through the elements of music—duration (length of sound), pitch (high or low), tone colour (harsh or smooth) and dynamics (loud or quiet)—to documenting these on paper, writing as a graphic score and finally playing using instruments and found objects.

[There are 7 short videos.]

English

Discuss how language is used to describe the settings in texts, and explore how the settings shape the events and influence the mood of the narrative (ACELT1599 - Scootle)

Music

Develop aural skills by exploring, imitating and recognising elements of music including dynamics, pitch and rhythm patterns (ACAMUM084 - Scootle)

Explore dynamics and expression, using aural skills to identify and perform rhythm and pitch patterns (ACAMUM088 - Scootle)

WRITING STYLE AND STRUCTURE

Names

The author has chosen the characters’ names very carefully. Students research the meanings of the following names and explain their relevance. [possible meanings are in square brackets]

- **Pender** [someone whose job was rounding up stray animals]
- **Brindabella** [‘Brindabella’ derives from an Aboriginal word meaning “two kangaroo rats” and is also the name of a national park in SE NSW; brindle describes a brown, tawny animal fur; Bella is a female name meaning beauty]
- **Pertelote the hen** [in Chaucer’s ‘The Nun’s Priest’s Tale’ from the *Canterbury Tales*, Pertelote is the favourite hen of Chauntecleer, the rooster.]
- **Dashwood the male kangaroo** [note the parts in this compound word]

Plot

As a joint construction, students list the plot elements of *Brindabella* as dot points or in short sentences. [Example of short sentences: *A boy called Pender lived with his father. He went for a walk along a river and into a valley. He heard a shot. He found a dying kangaroo.*]

- Note the lack of adjectives and descriptive and other detail which would bring the story to life.
- Select some of these plot points to read in more detail from the novel to contrast the effect of the beautiful, often literary, writing with the class list of bare, simple plot points.

Assessment Task:

In pairs, students write 3 (or more) plot points for a new narrative, perhaps about the early years of the male kangaroo, Dashwood; or what Pender does after the story finishes.

Swap these with each other and extend the bare plot outlines by adding more detail and description.

Create literary texts by developing storylines, characters and settings ([ACELT1794 - Scootle](#))

Symbols and Images

Symbols and images in *Brindabella* include the bush, animals and the moon.

The moon is a recurring motif.

- Read the following descriptions about the moon. These include metaphors and similes. "Night fell and the moon rose, huge and gleaming and thick as cream", page 87; "the moon was the thinnest slice of white, like the curved edge of a petal", pages 121-2.
- Students write odes or other literary texts using a symbol or image from *Brindabella*, such as the moon or an animal, as a metaphor and simile.

Guidelines by Danielle Mahoney for writing an ode are given below:

- Pick an ordinary place or thing.
- Give your subject praise or thanks. (Oh, _____!)
- Speak directly to the object
- Use adjectives to describe it
- Use verbs to bring that object to life (Personification)
- Use repeated lines

• <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/blog-posts/danielle-mahoney/explore-poetry-that-turns-the-ordinary-into-extraordinary-write-an-ode/>

O Rose thou art sick.
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm:

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

William Blake, 'The Sick Rose' from *Songs of Experience*, 1794.

Understand, interpret and experiment with sound devices and imagery, including simile, metaphor and personification, in narratives, shape poetry, songs, anthems and odes (ACELT1611 - Scootle)
Create literary texts that experiment with structures, ideas and stylistic features of selected authors (ACELT1798 - Scootle)

Create literary texts that explore students' own experiences and imagining (ACELT1607 - Scootle)

Vocabulary

Collective Nouns

Brindabella sees a mob of kangaroos, page 112. Collective nouns such as "mob" are a useful way of describing groups of things, including animals.

<https://www.mnn.com/earth-matters/animals/blogs/99-strange-collective-animal-names>

In pairs, students quiz each other to see if they know some of these collective nouns.

Baby Animal Names

Baby kangaroos are called joeys.

- Students brainstorm and then research what other baby animals are called.
- Teachers could use the list of adult animals from the Zooborns [link provided below], or other websites or books, and students complete the baby names.
<http://www.zooborns.com/zooborns/baby-animal-names.html>
- Use this information to play the game of Ten Questions or Celebrity Heads (using baby animal names).

Incorporate new vocabulary from a range of sources into students' own texts including vocabulary encountered in research (ACELA1498 - Scootle)

Point of View

Consider the question, "should kangaroos live free in the wild or in captivity?"

In the novel, Pender expected to eventually release Brindabella into the wild but she found her own way to freedom in Chapter 11. Then Chapter 12 begins, "Brindabella bounded up the hill, into the bush where she belonged."

- What is the author's implied (suggested) point of view about where Brindabella should be living at this point in the story? How do you know this?
- In the first few chapters of the book where do you think the author believed Brindabella should live? How do you know this?
- Students brainstorm the positives and negatives about kangaroos living in captivity or in the wild.

Assessment Task:

Individually, students write three paragraphs about kangaroos living in captivity or in the wild. The first paragraph should give the author's implied point of view; the second paragraph should give the point of view that supports kangaroos living in captivity; the third paragraph should give the point of view that supports kangaroos living in the wild.

Extension Task:

Older or advanced students add an introduction and conclusion to the paragraphs in the above Assessment Task to construct a simple, brief essay.

Understand how to move beyond making bare assertions and take account of differing perspectives and points of view(ACELA1502 - Scootle)

SCIENCE & HASS

Bees and Honey

1) Pender's father's beehive reflects growing community concern about the decreasing number of bees in Australia and around the world. This is leading to increased interest in planting bee-friendly vegetation and making or buying home-based hives.

- Students read the extract below from pages 74-75 of the novel.
On a wooden shelf, not far from the flower and vegetable beds, Pender's father kept a beehive. Inside, it hummed with bees who gathered what they needed from the flowers either near the house or in far-off, unseen places. Then they made sticky, strong-tasting honey, which Pender's father collected into jars from time to time and put on sandwiches in thick lumps.
- View the Behind the News (ABC TV) episode about the threat to bees in Australia
<http://www.abc.net.au/btn/story/s4291976.htm>

[There are also related teacher notes about bees

<http://www.abc.net.au/btn/resources/teacher/episode/20140729-beeproblems.pdf>]

Another resource about bees is ACT for Bees website <https://actforbees.org/resources/education/>

- **Predict.** Based on the information above about the importance of bee pollination for human and animal food supply, students can recognise the mutually beneficial relationship between bees and other living things and predict what might happen if bee populations are threatened further.
- **Plants.** Schools could plant bee-friendly plants such as natives, lavender and herbs.
- **Stingless Beehives.** Schools in warm climate states such as Queensland and northern NSW and Western Australia could establish native stingless beehives in their school grounds.
- **Honey Tasting.** The honey eaten by Pender and his father would be raw honey - unheated and unprocessed. Students could try to source local unheated and unprocessed honey from bee farms and taste test this to compare it with commercially produced honey.

NB Most honey bought in supermarkets is not raw and has added sugar
(<http://www.benefits-of-honey.com/raw-honey.html>)

2) Interested students may enjoy *Darius Bell and the Crystal Bees* by Odo Hirsch, a novel concerned with the possibility of the extinction of bees. Mature primary students could also read the novel, *How to Bee* by Bren MacDibble, particularly the beginning of the book about pollination. *How to Bee* is set in a future time when bees are thought to be extinct.

Biological sciences

Living things depend on each other and the environment to survive (ACSSU073 - Scootle)

HASS

The importance of environments, including natural vegetation, to animals and people (ACHASSK088 - Scootle)

Native Australian Animals

Many native Australian animals and birds are mentioned in *Brindabella*. These include kangaroos, wombats, possums, kookaburras and lizards.

- Students sketch some of these native animals and label the structural features and adaptations that help them survive in their environments. [They may need to research this first, possibly using the links below.]
- Compare and contrast these animals with the domestic animals mentioned in the novel, e.g. dog, cat, cows and chickens as a Compare and Contrast chart. (see Black Line Master 2).

The following sites from NSW Government and National Parks provide some helpful information:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/animals/NativeAnimalFactSheetsByTitle.htm>

<http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/plants-and-animals>

Living things have structural features and adaptations that help them to survive in their environment (ACSSU043 - Scootle)

Culling Kangaroos

Culling or killing animals when there seem to be too many to survive in their environment is very controversial.

Hunters are shooting kangaroos in *Brindabella* but it is unclear whether this is culling or hunting for other reasons such as food or sport.

- Students research when (if ever) Australian native animals should be culled.

This is an emotive issue which provides an opportunity for students to identify the language of opinion and feeling and the language of factual reporting.

The Behind the News episode about culling kangaroos is a useful resource.

<http://www.abc.net.au/btn/story/s2214518.htm>

Understand differences between the language of opinion and feeling and the language of factual reporting or recording (ACELA1489 - Scootle)

If You Find a Joey

Chapters 4-6 in the novel describe Pender finding and learning how to feed the joey, Brindabella.

- Using the Australian Geographic link below, watch the video of a joey being fed and read the information about what to do if you find a joey.
<http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/wildlife/2016/08/what-to-do-if-you-find-a-joey>
Further information is from WIRES. <https://www.wires.org.au/rescue/macropod-rescues>
- Present this information verbally to other students in small groups. [Props such as model or soft toys, a bottle and a towel, pillowcase or soft bag could be used by younger students.]

Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations incorporating learned content and taking into account the particular purposes and audiences (ACELY1689 - Scootle)

VISUAL ARTS

Charcoal Sketches

1) At the end of Chapter 6 and in Chapter 7 Pender draws a dirt drawing of Brindabella and then countless sketches of her using charcoal. He draws her close up, from a distance and in different poses, such as sleeping, eating, hopping and standing, beside the house and with the hens.

- Read these descriptions from the novel.
- Why are dirt and charcoal appropriate media for these drawings?

2) Students look at pictures of joeys and kangaroos from books such as *Big Red Kangaroo*, illustrated by Graham Byrne, and online.

- Students create four of their own quick charcoal sketches of kangaroos in different poses. Two of these should be close ups and two drawn from a distance.

Illustrations

The drawings by Andrew Joyner scattered throughout the text are illustrated in brownish duo-tone. (Also note the brownish colour of the text.)

- Students examine those set during the night, e.g. at the beginning of Chapter 11 and on pages 112-113, and compare with those set during the day. Note the amount of black used at night.
- Students cut out one of their charcoal kangaroo sketches from the previous activity and paste it onto a black background. Add highlights in white chalk (or equivalent) to show details of the setting at night, such as the moon.

Develop and apply techniques and processes when making their artworks (ACAVAM115 - Scootle)

FINAL ASSESSMENT TASK:

Bookstyling

Bookstyling is sometimes used by bloggers to promote books they enjoy. They arrange the book cover (or sometimes internal pages as well) with some other related or aesthetically pleasing items. They may place these onto a backdrop. Then they take some photographs and select the best to blog.

For examples of bookstyling, see Children's Books Daily blog by Megan Daley [links below]:

Fairy Bread by Ursula Dubosarsky

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BWqi3C9lUKm/?taken-by=childrensbooksdaily>

Easter Bilby

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BSdZ9OHFRwp/?hl=en&taken-by=childrensbooksdaily>

The Fifth Room by A.J Rushby

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BX8w570ldfB/?taken-by=childrensbooksdaily>

Bookstyling is still an underused form of book promotion, which students could use here to both promote *Brindabella* and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the novel.

- Students photograph a copy of the novel *Brindabella*, showing the cover, alongside a few selected physical pieces or images that are relevant to the story, themes or setting such as bushland, an image of a kangaroo, a representation of friendship, and possibly another related book as well. These items all need to be aesthetically pleasing and complement each other, particularly by sharing harmonious or contrasting colours.

[Students could possibly photograph these on top of (or in front of) a background or backdrop (equivalent of wallpaper backgrounds on ICT devices). This should be appropriate to the setting etc. and also harmonise.]

- Students select their best photo. These could then be posted on social media (if appropriate) such as Instagram or Pinterest; e-sent to the publisher, Allen & Unwin at <http://www.thingsmadefromletters.com/>; printed to hang on classroom or library walls or compiled to form a slideshow.
- Alternatively, these bookstyled models could be displayed in their concrete form.

RESOURCES & FURTHER READING

See About the Writers, below, for information about Ursula Dubosarsky and Andrew Joyner.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Hyperlinks have been included in these notes, above, where helpful or where their use is suggested.

FURTHER READING

'The Cryptic Casebook of Coco Carlomagno (and Alberta)' series by Ursula Dubosarsky:

The Perplexing Pineapple

The Looming Lamplight

The Missing Mongoose

The Dismal Daffodil

The Quivering Quavers

The Talkative Tombstone

The Word Spy and *The Return of the Word Spy*, *The Deep End* and *Tibby's Leaf* by Ursula Dubosarsky

The Blue Cat, *The Golden Day* and *The Red Shoe* (for upper primary to junior secondary) by Ursula Dubosarsky

Too Many Elephants in This House, *One Little Goat*, *Tim and Ed* and *The Terrible Plop* are picture books by Ursula Dubosarsky and Andrew Joyner

Dot and the Kangaroo by Ethel C. Pedley is an Australian children's classic where the kangaroo finds and cares for the young human. This situation is reversed in *Brindabella*.

Fog a Dox by Bruce Pascoe is about a fox cub also raised by someone not its parent, a dingo. The humans and animals in this novel live in a natural bushland setting.

The Spectacular Spencer Gray by Deb Fitzpatrick is about endangered potaroos and other animals trapped by poachers and hunters and rescued by a boy.

Wombat Warriors, *Smooch and Rose* and other junior novels by Samantha Wheeler are about endangered Australian animals

The Grand, *Genius Summer of Henry Hoobler* by Lisa Shanahan and other stories about quieter boys, boys happy with their own company or boys who are alone like Pender. *A Different Dog* by Paul Jennings is another short novel for the same age group about an introspective boy.

Big Red Kangaroo by Claire Saxby, illustrated by Graham Byrne is a picture book about kangaroos.

How to Bee by Bren MacDibble is a dystopia for mature upper primary readers. It addresses the issue of the extinction of bees (and other issues such as domestic violence).

Amazing Animals of Australia's National Parks by Gina M. Newton is the 2017 CBCA Eve Pownall winner and gives a cross-section of habitats, including bushlands.

My Friend Tertius by Corinne Fenton and Owen Swan, tells the true story of an adopted gibbon, who travelled through WWII from Hong Kong to Singapore to Perth to Melbourne with Arthur Cooper, a code-breaker in British intelligence. How long can Arthur keep Tertius with him? Is it right to do so?

ABOUT THE WRITERS AND ILLUSTRATOR

URSULA DUBOSARSKY

Ursula Dubosarsky is widely regarded as one of the most talented and original writers in Australia today. She is the author of many outstanding books, both for young adults and for children, and has won several national literary awards—some more than once.

Ursula was born in Sydney in 1961, the third child in a family of writers. From the time she was first able to read, at age six, she wanted to be a writer. She wrote stories and poems and puppet plays all through primary and high school. She continued to write when she grew up and started working and eventually her manuscript *High Hopes* was accepted for publication. Since then she has worked and studied in the area of children's literature and published many more books, receiving many Australian and international awards and nominations. Ursula has a PhD in English literature from Macquarie University, and lives in Sydney with her family.

Visit her website: <http://ursuladubosarsky.squarespace.com/>

ANDREW JOYNER

Andrew Joyner is an internationally published illustrator and author. His popular books include *The Terrible Plop* and *Too Many Elephants in this House* with Ursula Dubosarsky, his own Boris series, and *The Swap* by Jan Ormerod (a CBCA Book of the Year).

In 2009, when he was 40 years old, his first picture book was published with great success. Since then Andrew has illustrated many picture books, and his work is now published in more than twenty-five countries. He has also written and illustrated the Boris books, an early reader series about an adventurous warthog. He lives in the Adelaide Hills with his wife and two children—and their many, many pets.

Andrew says:

I like to draw with soft, dark pencils, or a brush dipped in a puddle of shiny black ink. I then like to play around with these drawings on my computer (or lately, my iPad). Drawing for me is a way of thinking and learning. Each time I do a drawing I feel like I've learnt something. Although sometimes it takes me a while to figure out exactly what I've learnt.

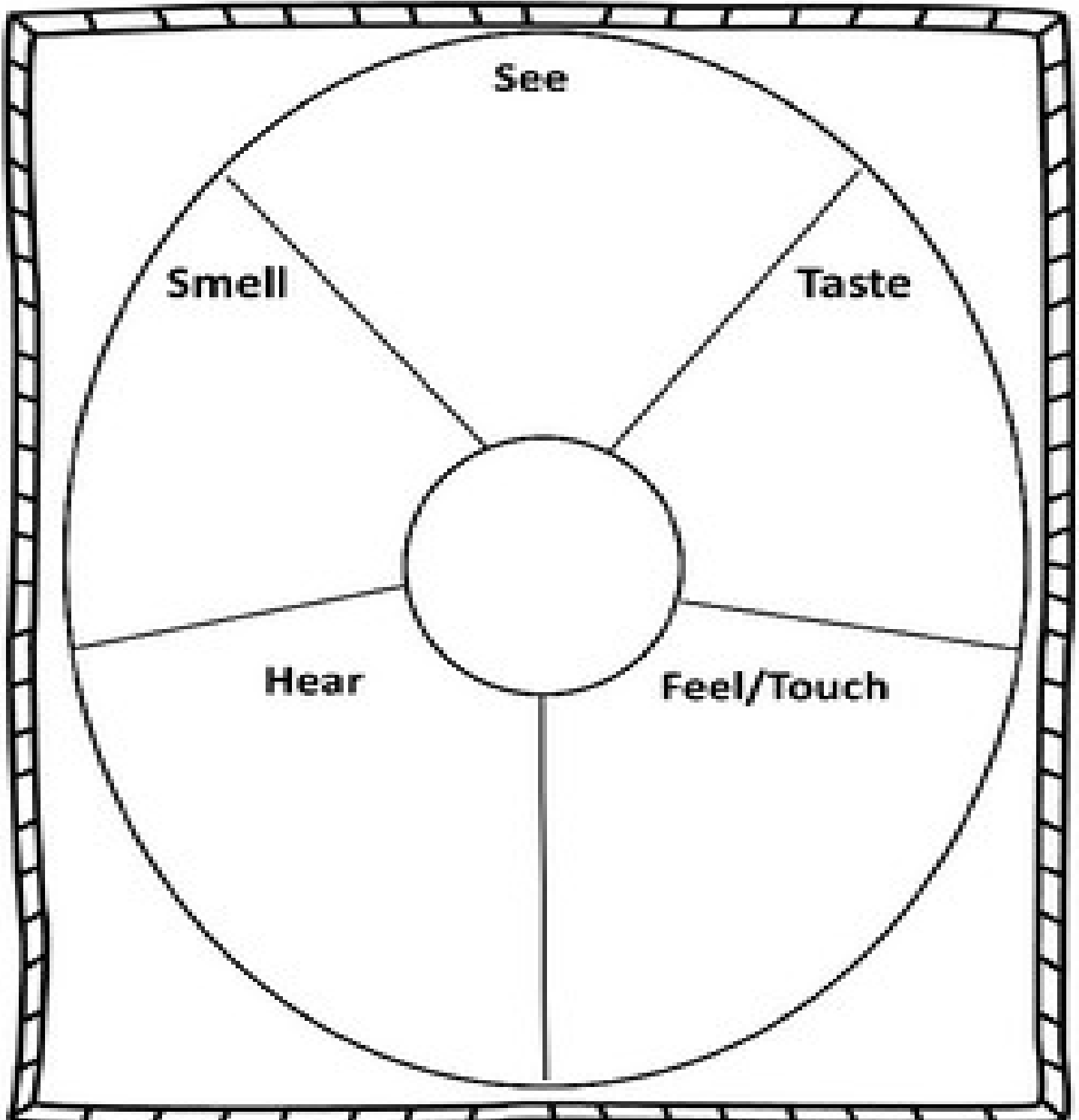
Aside from my work and all it involves (drawing, writing, and reading), I love poetry (although I don't write it), music (although I can't play an instrument) and food (although I'm a terrible cook).

Visit his website: <https://www.andrewjoyner.com.au/>

JOY LAWN

Joy Lawn is a freelance writer and reviewer for *The Weekend Australian*, *Magpies* magazine, ALEA and Boomerang Books blog, specialising in children's/YA and literary fiction. She judges the Prime Minister's Literary awards, the NSW Premier's Literary awards, the CBCA awards and has judged the Queensland Literary awards and others. Joy has taught in schools and universities, has worked for indie bookshops as a literature consultant and has an MA in Children's Literature & Literacy. Joy is fascinated by ideas and images and how authors and illustrators express these with truth and originality.

Sensory Wheel



Domestic & Australian Native Animals Compare and Contrast Chart

List similarities and differences between domestic animals and Australian native animals.

Domestic Animal e.g. cow	Both	Australian Native Animal e.g. kangaroo