

## NOTES FOR TEACHERS

### TELL ME WHY FOR YOUNG ADULTS by ARCHIE ROACH

#### SYNOPSIS

*Tell Me Why for Young Adults* is an abridged version of Archie Roach AM's highly acclaimed adult memoir, *Tell Me Why*, first published in 2019.

Intimate, moving and utterly compelling, Roach's life story traces the enormous odds he overcomes and his experiences of family and community, love and heartbreak, survival and renewal – and the healing power of music.

The book also contains a playlist for young people and the lyrics of many of Roach's songs – in themselves powerful historical testimonies. Through a series of conversations and workshops, facilitated online during COVID-19, Roach connected with Elders and young people, enabling those present to record their thoughts, memories and songs. Some of their powerful words are included in the book.

The focus of these conversations was the 30th anniversary of 'Took the Children Away' from Roach's multi-award-winning 1990 debut album *Charcoal Lane*. After the pandemic shut down what was to be his final Australian tour, Roach re-recorded the *Songs of Charcoal Lane* at his kitchen table, on his mother's ancestral country, Gunditjmarra country, in south-western Victoria.

To view the conversations and to access an extensive suite of lesson plans and videos, please visit the [Archie Roach Stolen Generations Resources](#), freely available on ABC Education. Created using song, books and stories to promote critical conversations across the country, the Resources are the result of a unique collaboration between the Archie Roach Foundation and Culture is Life.

#### THEMES

*Tell Me Why for Young Adults* explores many powerful themes including:

- 1) The effects of colonisation on First Nations people and communities, and truth telling of First Nations history
- 2) The ongoing intergenerational trauma experienced by the Stolen Generations and their families
- 3) Racism and the justice system
- 4) Creativity and healing through the Arts
- 5) The importance of First People's voices and stories

Belinda Duarte, CEO Culture is Life, writes:

'We hope our country really listens and learns to respect and understand the history and cultures of the First Peoples of this country so that past practices are never repeated. Government policies that saw Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families are from a dark chapter in Australian history. Through his songwriting, and in

particular 'Took the Children Away', Uncle Archie has voiced the trauma experienced by First Nations people since colonisation.

'These are confronting but critical lessons for our nation. In truth-telling we can shape perspectives and heal relationships. In his gentle way, Uncle Archie has sung the stories of his people's experiences of racism, discrimination and attempted genocide, and he asks us to listen and feel deeply.

'It is this sharing of stories, of truth-telling, that helps all Australians heal.

'As the oldest surviving culture in the world, we have stories going back thousands of generations told through ancient songlines, stories told in song, dance and art. It is a shared oral history anchored in this land's identity.

'To ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are heard in the national curriculum, it is critical that these voices and perspectives come from First Peoples themselves. Our stories need to be told so that all Australians can deepen their understanding, and especially their role and place in sharing this country's ancestral stories. This custodial responsibility means we must look to all of our history and how it has shaped us as a nation.'

## **WRITING STYLE**

Like his song writing, Archie Roach's writing in this book is personal, accessible and full of feeling. A keen observer and soulful poet, Archie voices the joy, pain and hope he found on his life's journey through song to become the legendary singer-songwriter and storyteller that he is today – beloved and respected by fans worldwide.

## **AUTHOR MOTIVATION**

Archie Roach is an extraordinary human being. In sharing his story, he invites all Australians to listen. He says:

'This edition of my memoir contains not just my voice but also the voices of other Elders and young First Nations people. The Stolen Generations impacted not only those taken, but also their children and grandchildren. The impact is intergenerational.

'The history of this country has been set. The story's there and we need to talk about and be truthful about it. You young people can write a new story for this country. We can all be authors of a new story for this country. A good story, a positive story. And that's what I'm looking forward to, I tell ya.'

## **AUTHOR BACKGROUND**

Archie Roach AM, a Gunditjmara and Bundjalung man, was born in Victoria in 1956. Taken at the age of two from parents he never saw again, he was placed into foster care. He started writing songs after meeting his soulmate Ruby Hunter when they were both homeless teenagers. His heartbreaking signature song, 'Took the Children Away', from his 1990 ARIA award-winning debut album *Charcoal Lane*, has become an anthem for the Stolen Generations. The song was the first to win an Australian Human Rights Award and the album was featured in US *Rolling Stone* magazine's Top 50 in 1992, won two ARIA awards and went gold in Australia. Archie's recording history includes twelve albums, soundtracks, film and

theatrical scores and his books include the award-winning memoir *Tell Me Why*, accompanied by a companion album, and the picture book *Took the Children Away*, illustrated by Ruby Hunter.

On 25 November, 2020, he was inducted into the Aria Hall Of Fame, the latest in a long line of honours, including the Ted Albert award for outstanding services to Australian music (2017) and the Order of Australia (2015), received for services to music and social justice.

### **EDITORIAL COMMENT**

Archie Roach's memoir has been edited with readers 12-16 in mind. It takes the reader on a journey through Roach's remarkable life – detailing how he was taken from his parents and siblings at the age of two, moved to a series of foster homes, and finally receiving a shattering letter at the age of 14, letting him know that his mother had died. Archie Roach overcame tremendous odds to find his family and his people and to discover the truth of his own history. Through struggles with addiction, homelessness and ongoing intergenerational trauma, and with the support of his life partner and musical collaborator, Ruby Hunter, Archie Roach found his extraordinary musical talent was a way for him to express deep truths and feelings – truths and feelings that continue to touch – and change – a nation.

The text design includes album covers and rare historical photographs and documents.

### **MARKETING & PROMOTION**

*Tell Me Why for Young Adults* will be vigorously promoted to educators and the general public. We urge everyone reading the book to engage with the extensive resources freely available online: [Archie Roach Stolen Generations resources](#).

### **STUDY NOTES**

(by First Nations Educators: Belinda Duarte, Shelley Ware, Thara Brown - [Archie Roach Stolen Generations Resources](#) )

Before starting – please read the Cultural Safety notes at the end of this document.

Often in history we think this happened a long time ago — the Assimilation Policy was only abolished 50 years ago. How does that make you feel?

The Elders whose voices are in this book were taken when they were babies and young children with no explanation for their parents and families. How do you think their families would have felt losing a child in their family? How do the Elders say they feel today about being a part of the Stolen Generations? Do you understand what intergenerational trauma is and how the children of these Elders are impacted today from their experiences?

What do you think about the government's Assimilation Policy that involved the removal of the Aboriginal children from their families?

The Apology to the Stolen Generations was made by Kevin Rudd on February 13, 2008. Watch [the Apology](#). Discuss what actions have occurred since Stolen Generations were acknowledged in 2008.

There were 54 recommendations in the [Bringing Them Home Report](#). It was concluded from

this report the Stolen Generations was a breach of human rights. Explore these recommendations as a class. Why do you believe that they largely have been ignored to date?

Campaign - As a class, investigate the impacts of the Stolen Generations and how we need to do better as a country to further support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have been directly and indirectly impacted.

Create a campaign to raise awareness of the [impacts on Stolen Generations](#) and the need to heal as a united nation.

[Watch Archie Roach speak of Sorry Day](#). What does the day represent? Why is it important to recognise this day?

Language - The loss of Aboriginal and Torres Strait languages and cultures had a huge impact on the Stolen Generations. Head to the [Indigenous Literacy Foundation webpage](#) and explore how you can help and bring language into your classroom to help keep it alive through books.

Timeline - Create a whole [classroom timeline](#) of the Stolen Generations.

Create a class book - Explore the local Country, history and stories of your local Aboriginal community. Research Elders and Stolen Generations survivors to honour their stories and celebrate their achievements.

Watch videos and listen to songs on [Archie Roach's Youtube channel](#).



### **Cultural considerations for delivering the Archie Roach Stolen Generations Resources**

The team at Culture Is Life and the Archie Roach Foundation encourage educators to use this guide when teaching the *Archie Roach Stolen Generations Resources*.

Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of your students viewing the videos for the first time and engaging in sensitive conversations is a priority, with particular consideration for your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students.

### **Experience and reflect on the content as a teacher before facilitating in the classroom**

It is important that you watch all of the videos and read through the content prior to sharing them with your class. Then talk to the students and families of the children, prior to commencement, so they are aware of what you are going to be talking about and the children are well supported in the classroom and at home.

Here is a guide from the Human Rights Commission to help you as a teacher to set up your classroom so it is safe for all students to learn and share Stolen Generations content.

[https://bth.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/BTH%202017\\_Fact%20Sheet\\_Teaching%20About%20the%20Stolen%20Generations.pdf](https://bth.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/BTH%202017_Fact%20Sheet_Teaching%20About%20the%20Stolen%20Generations.pdf)

### **Understanding your students' stories**

As a teacher, you must consider the wellbeing and backgrounds of your students. There may be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in your classroom who will relate and feel connected to these stories or directly impacted by the Stolen Generations. You may have children in out-of-home care or other living situations who can relate to the feeling of not living with family.

After viewing the content privately as an educator, consider those students in the classroom for whom this content may trigger traumatic or disturbing memories and feelings. As their educator, you know your students best, so please use your professional judgement. You can prepare them for the conversations these resources may raise by reassuring them that they are safe and have support available to them. Identify local support services in your school and community in addition to the support services provided in the videos.

### **Cultural safety and engagement**

Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of your students viewing the videos for the first time is a priority, with particular consideration for your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students.

Before you deliver the resources, we recommend inviting local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and teachers to be a part of the conversation. Engage with your local

Aboriginal services and build relationships with them so they are a part of your learning community.

There are many organisations and resources you can access for cultural competency or inclusion training and encourage ongoing professional development training in this area.

This resource is purely to offer suggestions in creating a culturally safe and inclusive environment for all people and to inspire ongoing relationships, respect and understanding with your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

#### **Organisations, services and individuals to engage:**

- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander land councils
- Local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community organisations
- Local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community members
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander education networks

#### **How to include Elders' welcomes and acknowledgments of Country**

We strongly encourage you to invest in an Elder of the traditional Country that you are on, or an Aboriginal person from your local community to share their voice and perspectives.

An alternative to a Welcome to Country is to allocate someone to formally acknowledge and pay respects to the Traditional Owners and Country that your school is on.

#### **Cultural support workers and support resources**

Consider engaging cultural and/or wellbeing professionals that are available for your students and staff to speak to. Support resources and services should be handed out or made accessible to your students.

#### **Inspire your own learning as an adult**

It's important that educators, like all professionals, are always learning to develop their own cultural competencies. We invite you to connect with [Culture Is Life's website](#) to enquire about professional development opportunities or to ask our Aboriginal educators questions around the resources.

Culture Is Life also recommends reading this article from Reconciliation NSW — [Developing your cultural competency](#) — and the original 1997 Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families published by the Human Rights Commission. This report gives you a full understanding of, as an educator, the extent and consequences of the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

#### **In the classroom**

##### **Before viewing videos**

Before you play the videos, make sure you reassure your students that they are safe, and that the past government policies you will talk about no longer exist and that the children who were taken were done so as a part of the [Assimilation Policy](#).

Tell them that by examining these accounts, they are being shown the effects that this policy had upon these generations of people. This is also a useful time to talk about the benefits of learning about the past in order to make a better future.

[This timeline](#) from the Human Rights Commission is also a useful discussion starter to help students understand the policy of forcible removal of children from their families.

### **Recommended order of viewing**

We strongly recommend that you watch the video of Archie's Roach reading *Took The Children Away* first with your class.

Listen to the song, watch the film clip, even hand out the lyrics to connect with the music and story. The discussion questions are there to help guide pre, during and post-viewing conversations.

However you plan the lessons over time, we recommend viewing the themes in the following order, depending on year level recommendations in the curriculum mapping.

Note that the reading of the book is recommended for all year levels, however some themes are more mature, in particular *Stolen Generations* and *Talking Our Truths*.

Cultural Identity and Healing Through Story and Arts can be adapted to junior and senior levels.

1. Cultural Identity
2. Stolen Generations
3. Talking Our Truths
4. Healing Through Story and Arts

### **Debriefing and expression**

#### **\*embed film clip here**

We highly recommend listening to the songs that Uncle Archie has suggested and exploring his [YouTube series](#) for live performances and stories behind the songs.

Allow your students to connect through various mediums — song, book, videos — and express what they are feeling in creative ways. There are suggestions in each theme for how students can express and process the thoughts and feelings that may arise.

Each unit has songs, chosen by Archie Roach, that fit the theme of the unit. You can explore these songs further with your students. Look at the lyrics as a class, be inspired to write your own songs, poems and stories. Create artworks, dances or simply listen to them during mindfulness sessions or in the background while you are working.

### **Acknowledgements**

We would like to acknowledge Uncle Archie Roach for his generosity, passion and dedication to our First Peoples and Stolen Generation survivors, for all the work he has done healing through his music and sharing his stories and spirit with the world.

We deeply honour the strength of our Elders in being able to share the traumas that they have endured, their wisdom and their knowledge in telling the truths of this country in the hope that we can heal as a nation and not repeat past wrongs.

In particular we sincerely acknowledge the Elders who shared their stories in these videos and guided the content to be best delivered and learnt from in schools.

- Aunty Lorraine Peeters for her stories and deepest love and respect for Uncle Archie in sharing her experiences and informing the resources to best honour our survivors.
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- Uncle Syd Jackson for his compassion and strength in serving others through his work on Roelands Mission in WA, inspiring for all people.

Our First Nations project leads and curriculum writers dedicated to honouring our Elders' stories and ensuring our non-Indigenous educators connect with the same respect and admiration we have for our survivors. Culture Is Life's CEO and co-curriculum writer Belinda Duarte, Project Manager and co-curriculum writer Thara Brown, and teacher, media presenter and co-curriculum writer Shelley Ware, and footage editor Matthew Cleaves.

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