Rain Dance
By Cathy Applegate, Illustrated by Dee Huxley

It hadn’t rained in the outback for more than two years. Baby had never seen rain and the
dogs had forgotten what rain was! Every day the family looked out over the cloudless blue
sky and hoped for rain. One day gentle breezes turned to wind gusts, thunder followed and
soon the dry earth was drenched in wonderful, life giving rain! Everyone was so happy, they
danced in the rain, celebrating the end of the drought.

1. Introducing the Book
Show the children the cover of the book. In what country do you think the story is
set? Give reasons. What is the girl on the cover doing? Why?

2. Responding to the Book
Which colours has the illustrator mainly used? Why? How do the reds, oranges and
yellows make you feel? When do the colours change? Why? Would the rain coming
to your house have the same effect on you as it did on the girl in Rain Dance?

The children discuss where they live. The colours and objects in their landscape are
written on the board. How do the colours in your local area make you feel? How are
they different to those in the book? The children paint one aspect of their local
landscape.

Singing
Learn to sing Galleries of Pink Galahs by John Williamson (The Sing! Book, ABC, page
30). This song celebrates home in the Great Australian Outback where rain is seldom
seen and the drought is causing townsfolk to pack up and leave town. Discuss what
the lyrics mean and the clever use of words to depict the despair and hopelessness
that the drought brings.

Structure
When the song has been learned confidently, create a sixth verse to describe the rain
coming to the outback, as it happened in the story Rain Dance. Work out which are
the rhyming lines and how many beats and syllables there are in each line; use the
words and ideas from the story, eg.

To the tune of verses 1, 3 and 5
6. Gentle breezes, thunder, dust,
   Frenzied blowing windy gusts.
   Raindrops fall on earth’s hard crust,
   At my home.
Have children view photos of different landscapes, eg. from calendars, books or off the internet, and then create their own artwork using one of the techniques, media and style as discussed in the initial art appreciation activity.

Extension:
As the children work, play music by Peter Sculthorpe or another Australian composer, which depicts the dry, Australian outback, eg.

Peter Sculthorpe:
- Sun Music I, II, III and IV
- Red Landscape
- Rain
- A Burke and Wills Suite
- Tailitnama Song

Vocal Collage
Using stimulus pictures of the dry Australian landscape, brainstorm words describing the drought stricken outback and the feelings of those living there. Have each group choose one aspect of the dry landscape (trees, dry creekbed, native animals or birds, empty tanks, starving sheep and cattle, farmers and their families, etc.) and create a collage of vocal sounds, words, phrases, etc to describe their chosen aspect.

The teacher, or selected child, can then orchestrate this vocal collage to create an aural depiction of the landscape.

Music
Learn to sing *Talk of the Town* by Shane Howard (*The Sing! Book*, 1999. ABC, pages 78 – 79). This song describes all the town folk waiting for the rain, the brolgas doing a rain dance and then the rain coming down.

Duration (Beat and Rhythm)
Hit and rub palms together to the beat of the verse to make a dry sound. In the chorus show the long notes by arching hands slowly in the air from left to right for the length of each long note then from right to left for the next long note. Make fingers wiggle like raindrops.

Tone Colour
Use instruments (found, environmental or commercial) to create sounds to represent the lyrics of the song, eg. sun, water, fishermen, heat, etc. Play the instruments at the appropriate times as the song is sung.

Structure
Listen to some of the pieces of music suggested in the visual arts activity above. Discuss how the composer has used instruments, pitch, dynamics, tone colour,
Round and round we dance with glee,
Rain is falling heavily,
Celebrate, come dance with me,
The rain has come!

Dynamics
Experiment with singing each verse at a different dynamic level (e.g., softly medium, loud, etc.). End the song with the newly created verse sung loudly in celebration of the rain.

Pitch
Choose one or more children who can play the piano or xylophone. Have them play a simple accompaniment to the song by playing to the beat the note based on the guitar chords written above the music, e.g.

Verses 1, 3, 5 and 6

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
Bb & Bb & Bb & F & F & F & F & F \\
Eb & Eb & Eb & Bb & Bb & Bb & Bb & Bb \\
C & C & C & Bb & Bb & Bb & Bb & Bb \\
Eb & Eb & Eb & Bb & Bb & Bb & Bb & Bb \\
Bb & Bb & Bb & F & F & F & F & F \\
Eb & Eb & Eb & Bb & Bb & Bb & Bb & Bb \\
C & C & C & Bb & Bb & Bb & Bb & Bb \\
Eb & Eb & Eb & Bb & Bb & Bb & Bb & Bb \\
\end{array}
\]

Verses 2 and 4

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
Bb & Bb & Bb & Eb & Eb & Eb & Eb & Eb \\
Bb & Bb & Bb & Eb & Eb & Eb & Eb & Eb \\
Bb & Bb & Bb & Eb & Eb & Eb & Eb & Eb \\
Bb & Bb & Bb & Eb & Eb & Eb & Eb & Eb \\
Bb & Bb & Bb & Eb & Eb & Eb & Eb & Eb \\
Bb & Bb & Bb & Eb & Eb & Eb & Eb & Eb \\
Bb & Bb & Bb & Eb & Eb & Eb & Eb & Eb \\
Bb & Bb & Bb & Eb & Eb & Eb & Eb & Eb \\
\end{array}
\]

Visual Arts

Appreciation
Examine works by Australian artists depicting outback landscapes, e.g.
- *Dry Weather* by Blamire Young
- *The Rabbiters* by Russell Drysdale
- *Emus in a Landscape* by Russell Drysdale
- *Wimmera Landscape* by Arthur Boyd
- *Upway Landscape* by Fred Williams
- *My Camp* by Henri Bastin
- *The Overlanders* by S.T. Gill
- *Murchison Sand Plain* by Robert Juniper

Discuss the different styles, techniques and media used by the different artists. How have they used space, line, colour, texture, etc. to create the impression of the outback? How effective is this?
rhythm, tempo and beat to create the musical description of the Australian Landscape.

In groups, have children choose a picture describing a dry Australian landscape and, using instruments, create a soundscape to portray this landscape in sound. Have them add sounds for wind, thunder, lightning, drops of rain and then heavy rain falling on their landscape. How do they create the changes to effectively portray the end of the drought?

Music

Tone Colour / Structure
Read through the book again and list the descriptive words used, eg,

- Still hot dry desert
- Breezes
- Gusts of wind
- Thunder
- Dust blowing
- Raindrops falling
- Heavy rain
- Celebrations and dancing

Select instruments to represent each of these descriptions. Experiment to find the best instruments for each word or phrase. Create a sound storm to accompany the reading of the book using instruments at the appropriate times.

Use the pictures of the book as a graphic score and, as each page is turned, create a soundscape with instruments, and no words, to describe the dry desert, the build up to the storm and then the heavy rain.

Dance

Composing
Order the descriptive words listed in the above music activity from the quietest and slowest sounds to the loudest and quickest sounds. Experiment with movements to express each phrase or word, then create a movement sequence showing the development of the storm from a still, dry desert, to a frenzied, rain dance. Add instruments from the previous music activity to accompany the dance.
Read through the following lines from the book, with the children, and discuss the images they evoke. Look at the way the author has used a minimal number of well placed words:

- Everything is quiet.
- Everything is still.
- Beyond our desolate farm I can see the horizon.
- A few dark clouds cruelly taunt us with promises of rain.
- The cicadas have been shrilling.
- The silence steals into corners and cracks and crannies.
- Like a hot, dry blanket, the silence spreads and suffocates everything.
- Shadows disappear, melting into a world turned grey.

Brainstorm and record words which describe the coming of the rain. Encourage the children to use all of their senses.

The lines above can be cut out and put into envelopes, along with four blank pieces of paper the same size. The children then rearrange the printed text in the order they think works best. The line order must still make sense. On the blank pieces of paper the children write their own version of the rain arriving, remembering to choose words carefully and use their senses.

The completed poems can be returned to the envelope. The envelopes are then mixed up and given to others to read.

3. Going Beyond the Book

Research: Which other cultures also do rain dances? What do their dances involve? For example, Native Americans.

Compare the landscapes of Australian artists, for example, The Walls of China, or Gol Gol, by Russell Drysdale, The Waterhole by Arthur Boyd, Townscape by Fro Hart and the illustrations of Dee Huxley.