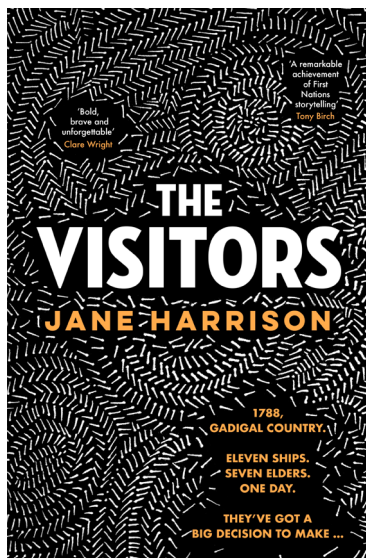


Classroom Resources



ISBN:
9781460761984

NOTES BY:
Casey Mulder

PUBLICATION DATE:
September 2023

The Visitors

Jane Harrison

BOOK SUMMARY

On a steamy, hot day in January 1788, seven Aboriginal men, representing the nearby clans, gather at Warrane. Several newly arrived ships have been sighted in the great bay to the south, Kamay. The men meet to discuss their response to these visitors. All day, they talk, argue, debate. Where are the visitors from? What do they want? Might they just warra warra wai back to where they came from? Should they be welcomed? Or should they be made to leave? The decision of the men must be unanimous – and will have far-reaching implications for all. Throughout the day, the weather is strange, with mammatus clouds, unbearable heat and a pending thunderstorm... Somewhere, trouble is brewing.

From award-winning author and playwright Jane Harrison, *The Visitors* is an audacious, earthy, funny, gritty and powerful re-imagining of a crucial moment in Australia's history – and an unputdownable work of fiction.

KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- AC9E10LE01
- AC9E10LE06
- AC9E10LA01
- A_TSIP2
- A_TSICP2

THEMES

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Histories and Cultures
- Belonging
- Power
- Humour

Recommended Reading Ages: 14+

Resources Created For: Middle Secondary

These resources may be downloaded for use and study within schools
but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.

Classroom Resources

Before Reading

1. Consider the cover design, including the title and additional text on the cover, as well as the blurb.
 - a. Complete a 'See, Think, Wonder' activity individually, and then share responses in small groups or as a class.

<u>SEE</u> Consider all the elements of the cover. What do you see?	
<u>THINK</u> Taking that into account, what do you think will take place in this novel?	
<u>WONDER</u> What questions does this leave you with?	

During Reading

Characterisation

1. Prepare a notetaking framework to gather as much information as possible about each of the characters in the novel. This could be done by creating a mind map in a reading journal (one page per character) or by using a table such as the one below:

Character	Clan	Appearance	Important Relationships	Strengths & Abilities	Concerns & Worries	Key Quotes	Connection to Country
Grandfather Joseph							
Lawrence							
Gary							
Nathaniel							
Walter							
Albert							
Gordon							

2. Consider the mentions of modern clothing throughout the novel. Why might the author have opted to have clothed the characters this way?
 - a. What does the clothing represent for each man?
3. Before this story was a novel, what other form did it take?
 - a. How might the clothing have been important in this form of storytelling?

These resources may be downloaded for use and study within schools
but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.

Classroom Resources

Setting

1. Consider how Jane Harrison represents the significance of connection to Country for Aboriginal people.
 - a. What do we learn about the Country where this novel is set? Think about the land, the animals, the plants, the waterways, the ocean and the night sky.
 - b. How are elements of the natural environment used to reflect characters' thoughts and feelings about what is happening?
2. Now consider the connection to Country each of the men has and add some notes about this to your characterisation table.

Symbolism

1. The weather functions symbolically throughout the novel. Map the weather chapter by chapter, using a set of symbols of your choosing.
 - a. Alongside this map, note down the key events (three maximum) in each chapter. Now consider how Jane Harrison has used the weather as a symbol.
 - b. How might this use of the weather reflect the novel's origins as a stage play?
2. The mammatus cloud is a particularly pertinent motif throughout the novel. What is a mammatus cloud, and why might the author have selected this as a motif?
 - a. Are there any other motifs throughout the novel? Gather evidence from the text to support your response.

Cultural beliefs and practices

1. This novel is rich in its description and explanation of Aboriginal cultural beliefs and practices. Locate the explanation of each of the following practices in the novel. Select a quote to represent each practice and note down the page number.
 - Trading
 - Songs and songlines
 - Kinship
 - Meetings and gatherings (including message sticks and the use of fire)
 - Navigation
 - Hunting and fishing
 - Initiation
 - Marriage and relationships
 - Food
 - Welcome
 - Health and healing
 - Sickness and death
 - Payback

Please note – Aboriginal cultures are diverse, and these cultural beliefs and practices are relevant to the language groups represented in the novel. It is important to note that these practices may not be indicative of other language groups throughout Australia.

These resources may be downloaded for use and study within schools
but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.

Classroom Resources

After Reading

Discussion questions

Prologue: How does the author use the death of the parrot to foreshadow what's to come?

Chapter 1: Why is Lawrence selected for the mission, and what is he required to do?

Chapter 2: What gift does Gary take home for his wife? How will she prepare it, and what will she make out of it?

Chapter 3: How do Gordon and his mob prepare for the gathering?

a. What is the significance of the fire?

Chapter 4: What does Joseph see and experience on the way to the gathering?

a. How are songs a 'living map of country'? (p. 33)

Chapter 5: How is Nathaniel supposed to travel to the gathering and how does he choose to travel?

a. Why does he make this decision?

Chapter 6: Why does Walter think that his is the most important waterway? (pp. 51–53)

Chapter 7: How does Albert navigate and how does this impact when he chooses to travel to the gathering?

Chapter 8: How do the men respond to one another when they begin arriving for the gathering?

Chapter 9: Why is Nathaniel wary of Walter?

a. How do clans decide who will attend these meetings?

Chapter 10: What are the protocols that must be followed before the discussions begin?

Chapter 11: Why is Gary disappointed when Raymond does not arrive for the meeting?

Chapter 12: Why is Albert surprised, and some of the other men irritated, when Lawrence arrives?

Chapter 13: Lawrence observes the other men as the meeting begins. Note down his observations. (pp. 89–93)

Chapter 14: Who decides to vote against an attack and why?

a. How many nowees are now in the cove?

Chapter 15: What are the key points Walter makes when stating his case?

a. How many nowees are now in the cove?

Chapter 16: Walter elaborates on his motives – note down his reasoning for welcoming the aliens. (pp. 120–121)

Chapter 17: What is Albert distracted by? (pp. 138–139)

Chapter 18: What is the story that Albert and Gordon share about thundersticks? (pp. 144–147) Note down the key points.

Chapter 19: Who decides to sit out of the vote and why?

a. How do the other men respond to this suggestion?

These resources may be downloaded for use and study within schools
but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.



Classroom Resources

b. How do they take the vote?

Chapter 20: What is Nathaniel's reasoning for his vote?

a. How do the other men respond?

Chapter 21: What have Lawrence and Grandfather Joseph learned about the visitors from previous observations and interactions?

Chapter 22: Who says, 'knowledge is like where fresh water meets sea water' and what do they mean by this statement? (p. 195)

a. What do the men observe on one of the ships, and how do they respond?

Chapter 23: Joseph suggests the aliens are capable of learning. What aspects of his own culture and society might Joseph be referring to?

Chapter 24: Gary sees a vision of his wife. What does she say to him, and how does this affect his decision? (pp. 220–221)

a. How many nowees are now in the cove?

Chapter 25: Albert believes in the welcome protocols, but also shares a story about potential risk. Note down the key points of this story.

Chapter 26: Gordon talks about the practice of welcoming visitors. Why is a 'welcome' significant? (pp. 249–250)

Chapter 27: Joseph reflects on his great love. Who was this and why do they no longer see each other?

Chapter 28: What will Joseph need to do to take Lawrence's spirit home?

a. What story does Gordon share about his father, and why does this lead to him changing his vote?

Chapter 29: How does each of the men respond as Lawrence's breathes his last breath?

Chapter 30: Gordon has a change of heart. Why?

a. What takes place when the first of the visitors comes ashore?

Coda: List the ways the 'welcome' negatively impacts the clans.

About the Author

Jane Harrison is descended from the Muruwari people and is an award-winning playwright, author and festival director. Her first play, *Stolen*, was performed across Australia and internationally for seven years, and her second, *Rainbow's End*, won the 2012 Drover Award. Her young adult novel *Becoming Kirrali Lewis* won the 2014 Black & Write! Prize, and was shortlisted for the 2014 Prime Minister's Literary Awards and the Victorian Premier's Awards. The stage play of *The Visitors* was a smash hit at the Sydney Festival in 2020, and the Sydney Theatre Company's production of the play took place in late 2023. Jane directed the Blak & Bright First Nations Literary Festival in Melbourne in 2016, 2019 and 2022. She believes in the power of stories to strengthen cultural connection.

These resources may be downloaded for use and study within schools
but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.